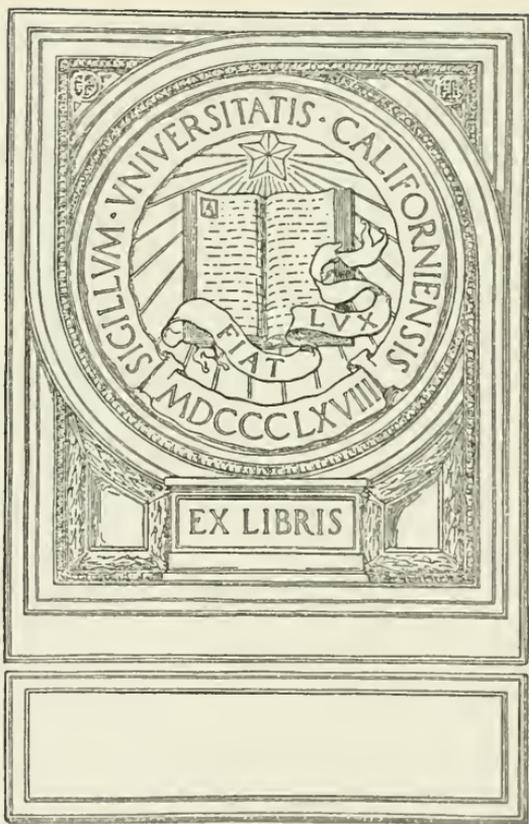


TRIX
AND
OVER-THE-MOON



AMÉLIE RIVES



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OVER-THE-MOON SEEMED ABOUT TO CLIMB THE BIG CATALPA-TREE

TRIX
AND
OVER-THE-MOON

BY
AMÉLIE RIVES
(PRINCESS TROUBETZKOY)

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS BY
F. WALTER TAYLOR



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WITH LOVE
TO
MY SISTER GERTRUDE

M272105



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TRIX
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I

TRIX was transplanting a mock-orange shrub; the network of fibres was all loose and ready to come away; only the big tap-root at which she chopped and chopped, with her strong young arms bared above the elbow, held grimly to its native soil and refused to loosen or be severed. She took up her discarded hoe again, and, leaning on it, pushed back with her forearm the damp locks, so exactly the color of the dark-red earth in which she had been digging.

“Ugh!” she said, addressing Nibs, her Irish terrier, who sat watching her with an

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air of morné resignation. "It's enough to make Moses cuss—though, after all, why Moses should have been called meek, I can't imagine, Nibs, my child. He murdered a man and broke the stone tablets, and beat a poor rock instead of talking nicely to it, and all because of temper—yet they call him meek. That's the way history's written. I'm glad nobody's going to write ours—ain't you, Nibsey? Well, let's have another go at this wretched thing!" And, setting her small mouth in a firm, red circle, she again attacked the tap-root.

It was early in the morning, and yet Trix had set out three other shrubs, superintended the planting of half a dozen trees, seen to the strawberry bed, overhauled the stables and dairy, and written about fifty checks. The day was yet before her, she felt, and the day would be full. What she had done already was a mere five-finger exercise, as it were, to get her singularly varied powers into good running order. Later there would be Tim and his spelling-lesson, her new habit-skirt, the colts, the farm, that man from Barbourville to see about the contract for timber in

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Hickory Mountain, her runabout to varnish—above all, the sick mare to see after. She had been down to the mill once that morning already, but she must go again, “as soon as this darned bush is settled,” she ended, in her thought, pausing again and regarding it with warm and helpless vindictiveness. Trix was small and the shrub was small, and so far they seemed a good match for each other, but she conquered finally, and set off at a contented little trot, dragging it after her. She rarely walked; or if she did, it was like an alert soldier to the rhythm of an invisible drum. As she reached the spot that she had selected as the future home of the obstinate plant, and dashed her hoe deep into the sodden turf, she paused for a moment and looked about her, drawing deep into her lungs the dank, bitter-sweet air of the March morning.

From where she stood the ground fell away on all sides, leaving high in air the big grassy square, with its hedges of mock-orange and thorn and great acacia-trees planted in circles to right and left. Beyond lay fold on fold of dark-red meadow-land, divided into fields by

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the zigzag of snake fences, each watered by its own brook, and each known to Trix as most women know the rooms in a familiar house. Delicate and faintly blue, as in an old-fashioned water-color drawing, stretched on either side the horns of the crescent of mountains in which her home was set. Far away to the southward spread league on league of forest, in a blackish-violet haze of winter twigs that grew dimmer and more pale with distance until they seemed to merge into the sea that lay beyond them, partaking of its faded sadness and mystery, under the resigned pallor of the March sky. It was very still. The earth seemed dozing under its curtain of soft air. Only now and then came the thud of an impatient hoof from the stables, the squeal of romping colts in a near paddock, the shrilling ripple of sheep-bells, the long-drawn note of a locomotive, far away, yet seeming near at hand, because of the damp atmosphere. And as she stood and gazed upon it, a big welling tenderness, for which she could not have found a name, tightened the girl's breast and set a sudden ache in her throat.

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“Why does it make me feel sad?” she asked herself, surprised. “I love it and it is mine. What queer things people are, anyway!”

Then, as she fell to work again, she began repeating to herself some lines of Horace; for this was another of the strange anomalies which went to make up the being called Trix—that she was wholly unliterary in her tastes and yet that she loved Horace and read him in the original. Her father had been one of those old-fashioned Virginia University men, who taught their boys and girls Latin and Greek along with their a-b-c’s. Now she murmured, as her hoe flashed vigorously up and down in the gray light that she loved:

“‘Often did I pray that I had a piece of land, not so very large, with a garden, and near the house a perennial spring of water, and a little wood besides. Heaven has done more and better for me than my wishes. It is well, Son of Maia. I ask nothing further, save that thou wilt continue to me these blessings. . . . I trust that what I have makes me thankful and content; if this be so, then thus I pray, ‘O make for me, Heaven, my

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cattle fat, and all I have heavy except my wit, and, as Thou usest to be, still be my best guardian." " "

For Trix was deeply religious in her own odd, curt little way. She did not care for church-going and did not pretend to, but she always knelt down last thing, in her riding-habit, before she went hunting, and prayed to be taken care of, and she never rode a green hunter at a big fence without the same formula.

As she was pressing down the last spadeful of earth, with her stout little boot, now crimson with the soft clay, there came toward her, out of one of the many doorways of the long, rambling white house with its old shingle roof cushioned with moss, one of the most endearing little figures possible to imagine.

This was Tim, her seven-year-old son. He advanced alertly, his hands in his pockets, and a damaged spelling-book under one arm. Trix cast upon him a grave and knowing look, which he returned with a smile of milk-and-honey, and a radiant beam from limpid, periwinkle eyes.

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“Muvver,” said he, forestalling probable admonition, “I’ve learned my spellin’. Can I go wiv you where you’re goin’?”

“Muvver” and “wiv” were the two relics of babyhood that still clung to the very adult language of Tim.

“How can I take you, Tim? I’m going over the farm. You couldn’t walk and you certainly couldn’t ride.”

There was some bitterness in Trix’s voice as she made this last remark, for this only son had not inherited his mother’s gift for horses. He did not care for them and they did not care for him, and he rode exactly like the White Knight in *Alice Through the Looking-Glass*. There was no rare and devious manner in which a person could come off a horse that Tim had not accomplished. He confessed frankly his preference for machinery, which made Trix reproach herself for having used the lawn-mower so often before his birth.

“For of course it’s that,” she reflected, bitterly. “Why didn’t somebody tell me? It isn’t natural . . . to come of generations of sportsmen as he has done and then put machinery before horses.”

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"I can get on again . . . easy," urged he; "I don't mind fallin' off. Nosey waits for me now. Please, Muvver."

"I'll think about it," said Trix. "We'll see how the spelling-lesson goes first. . . ."

"I've did a renormous sum," Tim flung out, carelessly.

"*Spelling*, not *sums*, is what I told you to do," observed his mother, unmoved. She had decided to guide Tim's career in spelling, ever since one day when his grandmother had sought to show him off to some visitors, and Tim, following the pencil along the pictured page, where each object was faced by it's portrait, had spelled triumphantly, "P-a-i-l, bucket!"

"Miss Be'trix," here broke in the voice of Tim's Mammy from a low portico, "Mr. Parley, he hyuh in de pantry. . . an' say kin you pleas'm step dyar a minute, right quick. . . . Seem like he moughty troublesome in he min'."

"Oh, it's that mare! . . . I know it's that mare!" cried Trix, casting down her spade, and she rushed into the house, calling over her shoulder, "You stay with Mammy, Tim, and say your spelling to her."

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In the pantry the overseer greeted her with a very lugubrious countenance.

“Mis’ Bruce, ma’am,” said he, “I thought I’d jes get you to come yo’self. All three of them mars is mighty sick, but that flea-bit gray looks like she’s goin’ to die right prompt.”

“Wait till I get the strychnine and the hypodermic syringe,” called Trix, running again, and she fled into her room and out at a side door, and met him with the required articles at the old stile leading to the mill.

They went in procession by a short cut through the apple orchard, Trix and Parley ahead, and Joe, the head groom, a tall mulatto, with a figure like the “Man with the strigil,” following at a sort of lope, an India-rubber drenching-bottle in his hand. The slick, red clay of the path, ribboning between winter weeds, took on a mauve glister from the purplish sky. The wet rails of the fences shone with the same tint. Below them, the hoof-marked road and the knotted branches of old catalpa-trees reproduced again the tones of dull red and violet. All the landscape seemed washed in with these two colors, varied only by the sweeps of broom-straw,

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warm saffron, and bleached yellow, and silvery gray, that clothed the stony fields at the foot of Hickory Mountain. At the turnstile that led out of the orchard, they passed the lot where the hogs lived happily in unrooting luxury, so lavish was their feed of maize, and a huge Berkshire boar stood up with an inquiring grunt and ears set forward as they went by, regarding them out of fixed, human-looking eyes, half hidden under inch-long lashes.

"That cert'n'y is a prime boar, Mis' Bruce, ma'am," observed Parley, as they passed, and half bent a leg to pause, but Trix hurried him on.

"Yes . . . yes . . . I know. . I'll come back and look at him later. The mare now."

"That mar'," said Parley, with a lingering backward glance at the prize boar, "you mustn't be too set back when you see her, Mis' Bruce, ma'am. She shore is a sight."

And she was indeed "a sight," poor brute. In her big loose-box, up to her belly in clean straw, she stood with legs spread, and looked past them out at an unkind world, from great, bleared, resigned eyes that said, "I haven't

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deserved this of you." Her breath came in sharp, hot blasts from her convulsed nostrils, and she trembled from time to time, despite the mammoth poultice which was applied to her chest and held in place by means of coarse sacking pinned and girthed over her back.

"Poor thing . . . poor thing . . . poor old lady," said Trix, mothering her. "Here—let me get this over." She nipped up a deft fold of muscle, and inserted the hypodermic. The mare winced and backed sharply against the wall.

"Where's that whiskey, Joe? . . . Here . . . give it to me . . . You get up on that beam now and rope up her head. . . . There, that's it. . . . Now, old lady. . . . So . . . so. . . Nobody's going to hurt you."

She had scrambled up on the manger, and stood balancing her lithe muscular body, the drenching-bottle in one hand, the other ready to catch hold of the mare's tongue when Joe should have hauled her head into position.

"I 'clar' that cert'n'y is a pretty sight," said Parley, watching "the Squire," as everybody called her to themselves, while she took

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the writhing, white-pink tongue of the sick mare in one strong, brown little hand, and with the other inserted the bottle between her jaws. The mare gulped and gulped, and rolled helpless eyes backward, as though asking if there were no pity coming from the rear of this strange world that used her so ungently. Then it was over, and she stood resigned and shivering again, chewing and tasting her own tongue, so strangely coated with that odd, new, burning taste. And presently, as Trix stood and talked to her, and combed out the thick coarse mane with sympathetic fingers, the blast of breath from her nostrils began to give forth the acrid odor of alcohol.

“There—that’s helping her,” said Trix, with a sigh of satisfaction. “Look at her eye—it’s quieter already.”

“Ef you do bring that mar’ through, Mis’ Bruce, ma’am,” said Parley, soberly, “I’ll just give out as you’re a bawn wonder.”

“Now let’s have a look at the others,” said she, rinsing off her arms and hands in a bucket of water that Joe brought from the millstream.

The two other mares were weeping co-

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piously from eye and nostril, and coughing with loud, dusty-sounding coughs, but their temperatures were normal, and Trix found nothing to worry her in their condition.

She had bought the three in a bunch a few days ago from a dealer in Richmond, one of them being a big upstanding Percheron, very valuable for a brood-mare, while the lower-class sisters were only rough but sound creatures fit for farm work. It had been one of Trix's "bargains": one of the seemingly mad purchases which she continued to make, and which turned out well, to the endless amazement of her husband and the Overseer. On this occasion she had really only meant to try the Percheron, but casting her eye—that extraordinary organ called "an eye for a horse"—over the other two, standing forlorn and very ill with influenza in a corner of the yard, a luminous idea had come to her.

"I tell you what, Mr. Latch," she had said, "I'll take the Percheron at your price if you'll throw in those two other mares at mine."

And Mr. Latch, thinking her a lady-idiot, had consented. Trix had the three promptly

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put into a box-car, and she and Joe brought them up to Oldwood, where they were destined finally to fill valuable places in the stock, and, incidentally, the heart of Mr. Latch with the gloom of the outwitted.

“That little Mrs. Bruce from up the valley . . . she certainly is the devil an’ all ’bout hawses,” he confided to his head man. “Now she done me thorough over them three mares . . . done me quite honorable, you onderstan’ . . . but *done* me . . . done me clear as a whistle.”

II

BEFORE she went up to the house to have a tub, Trix visited the stables and cast an eye on the yearlings in the stable paddock. She whistled, and two or three strolled toward her, reaching out with their long, well-set necks, and working square, plushy, gray lips in anticipation of probable sugar. One, however, her favorite, a powerful bay with black points, named Bright Boy, lagged in the rear, near a tool-house, and fascinated her by his singular behavior. Flattening his ears, he stretched his head as far toward a corner of the tool-house as he could stretch it, without going farther himself, then lifting high his upper lip, shot it forward in a series of frightful grimaces.

“Why, he looks exactly as if he were making faces at somebody,” she thought. “I’ve seen colts do that to horses until they kicked them,

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but what is this silly doing it for?" Then another thought occurred to her, and she called, sternly, "Tim!"

Tim's little silver-gold head promptly crowned the top of the garden paling beside the tool-house, and with a last hideous contortion of his pretty nose, Bright Boy squeaked, kicked sideways, and trotted toward her.

"I didn't do a *thing* to him, muvver," called Tim from the paling. "I jes whistled and called him like you do, and he began makin' faces an' nippin' at me."

"It's because they all know you don't like them that they hate you so," said his mother, sadly. "Can't you try to like them, Timmy?"

"I don't know how to begin," he said, cast down a little. "I don't, *don't*—like 'em, muvver—I jes like muchines better—but I would like 'em not to make faces at me. Can't you show me how?"

Trix took him along with her for an inspection of the stables, and tried literally to instil some "horse sense" into his charming noddle. Some of her darlings she merely visited in their boxes, some she had stripped

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and led out into the stable-yard. It was altogether a satisfactory experience.

"We'll have a pretty nice string, Joe," she said, happily. "I'm not very keen about the summer horse-shows—only one or two of them. But Glory and Never-say-die will be in tiptop shape by autumn, and those three green hunters we've been handling this winter. And oh! . . . by the way . . . I've heard of a three-year-old—a wonder they say—one of Orion's colts . . . over in the valley. I'm going over to see him in a day or two. . . ."

"'Rion's colts apt tuh be moughty mean, Miss Trix, . . ." said Joe, reflectively. "Moughty mean," he added. "'Member dat colt a his'n nigh stomped de life outer Aun' Sukey's Jim?"

"They were all handled wrong from the beginning, Joe. . . . This one's never been regularly 'broke'—horrid word! . . . We'll get him in shape in no time. . . ."

But Joe tilted his cap with one finger and stood scratching his head with the others.

"I don' like dem 'Rion colts fuh *nuthin'*, Miss Trix," he murmured. "Dey all jes ez mean ez gar-broth."

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“Oh, you’re such a wet blanket, Joe!” laughed his mistress. “If you were a horse, you’d have to have electric lights in your box or get melancholia. Wait until I show you. If that three-year-old is what I think he is, we’ll cut out all the Northern swells. Cheer up, Joe. By the way, how are Gleam’s feet getting on? I’ll never have another horse bled that way. I don’t believe in it at all . . . Remember, we’re going to win with that Orion colt. He’s a blue-roan, I hear. I’d rather have had him bay or brown—any other color in fact. But if he’s a good dark roan like a black Hamburg grape with the bloom on it, why then. . . . *Cheer* up, Joe!” And, with another laugh at his dubious face, she ran off toward the house, with Tim making a good second.

Refreshed and trimly smooth as a white pigeon after a dip, in her coat and skirt of white Bedford cord, and brown buckled shoes that made her pretty feet look like toys, with her wine-colored locks brushed into a lustrous plait, and the stable smell changed into clouds of iris-root, Trix, renewed and re-

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spectable as lady of the house, went in search of its master. "Where's Marse Sidney, Mammy Henny?" she asked, meeting that personage in the hall.

"He done shet up in he stedly [study] all *day* long, honey. I hyar him a-groanin' some . . . but I ain' dyar go in, sence dat day he fling de ink-pot at my hade an' den gimme a silk dress tuh 'scuse him furrin. You reckon he tuck sick? . . . Dat book-writin' business sut'n'y do seem tuh twis' de intrils."

"No, I don't reckon he's sick, Mammy. . . . I reckon his book just won't go the way he wants it to."

"'N' you goin' tuh comfut him? *Dat's* right, honey! Be a real helpmeet furim, like you' ma befo' you."

III

SIDNEY BRUCE and Beatrix Marshall had married when they were, respectively, twenty-three and eighteen. They had played together as children, been separated for some years by his education and the foreign travels on which a rich uncle had taken him, and met again, to fall promptly in love with each other, during a spring week at the University of Virginia. He had fallen in love with her, for one thing, because she reminded him so vividly of the equestrian statue of Jeanne d'Arc near the Louvre in Paris, and of this statue he had always been enamoured. She had fallen in love with his love of her, his splendid figure (for women care about men's looks, though tradition says the contrary), and his growing reputation as a young writer of promise. It was the appearance of several widely noticed

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stories in *Harper's* and other well-known magazines that had decided Sidney on the career of what he always called "a man of letters." He cared not a rap for horses, and they were then, as they had always been, since she could ride on a little pillow before the old coachman, Trix's chief object in life. There is a genius for horses, just as there is for music, or poetry, or painting, and Trix was born with it. Sidney could sit a horse well and stick on, like any other Virginian, but of riding as a fine art he knew nothing and cared less. He liked the country because it was quiet, and he had long, uninterrupted hours to devote to his writing, in which he was really absorbed, but he knew still less of farming than of horses, and so the management of Oldwood had fallen entirely into the capable and willing hands of Trix, who was also that very rare thing, a born farmer, and knew at a glance when a furrow was being turned too wide or too narrow, and when the skin of apple-trees was too tight for them, and needed slitting.

There was very little money in the Bruce-Marshall combination, so Trix worked like

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a little beaver for the first four years, merely to knit tag-ends together, and then, to her extreme delight, found that the last three years were bringing her in a handsome surplus from the successful breeding of mules and the sale and showing of her horses.

The place she had always adored, ever since she had spent wild and glorious summers of tomboyhood there, when her mother used to visit old Mrs. Bruce. She could recall with a thrill, as keen now as it had been then, the glee with which she used to catch her first glimpse of the mountains at Gordonsville, after the long, dreary run from Richmond, and the fresh whiffs of clay and grass-land, so heady with their bouquet, as of some Pan-trodden vintage, to the small nostrils still dry with the stale odor of hot bricks.

The house of Oldwood was, as has been said, a long, low, rambling structure, built of wood and painted white. The paint, however, had been worn by time and weather to a silvery gray, that caused Trix to knit her brows, straight and black as the marks on a tiger-butterfly's wings, and cogitate on plans for having it repainted. But it was

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charming as it was, set deep among the foliage of silver poplars and old locust-trees, blending with the soft, homely landscape, as the gray mass of a hornet's nest blends with the boughs and leaves of the tree on which it has been fastened.

They lived quite alone there, with Tim and the old servants who had been inherited with the place. Two of these latter were remarkable even among that remarkable species, the old family servant, and caused the only upheavals that ever stirred the waters of that calm matrimonial pool. One was Trix's own Mammy, now Tim's—a plump, amiable negress—very sentimental, very pious, full of sayings “dat de Lawd,” with whom she seemed to be on intimate, conversational terms, “done tole her Hissself.” Full of faith in “de Quality,” of whom Trix and Sidney were, of course, the highest products, and of unutterable scorn for all “po' white trash,” among whom, unfortunately, she reckoned Alison Stark, the other of these unique beings, an old Scotchwoman from Dumfrieshire, who had nursed Sidney's father, and then descended to Sidney as Mam-

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my Henny had descended to Tim, and who was now housekeeper at Oldwood. Between these two there was an armed truce, which broke out sometimes into a regular border war; and then Sidney, who was the only living being who could impress with some idea of authority the rock-ribbed mind of Mrs. Stark, and Trix, who alone could calm the turbulent spirit of Mammy Henny, would descend like gods from their machines of state upon the battle-field and restore order by routing both opponents.

A reserved and insultingly respectful disapproval of Trix had marked Mrs. Stark's demeanor ever since her master had brought the former as a bride to Oldwood, but she was of a granite reserve in her expression of this feeling, to all save Mammy Henny, whom she baited on occasion with the skill of a grim female picador.

"You talks sich foolishness 'bout ladies an' hawses," Mammy Henny had burst forth at her one day, when Trix had ridden off astride of a troublesome two-year-old, "that I don' b'lieve youse ever *seed* a lady or a hawse in yo' ole Scawtlan'!"

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"I'm no sae weel acquaint wi' *Virgeenia* leddies," Alison had replied, primly, "but nae *Scotch* leddy wad lowp on yon fleysome beast, like a buik on a fender."

Alison's similes were always drawn from her own experience, and what grim-looking books she had were warped from being set astride of her fender, to mark the place, when she was called to other duties.

"Gre't day in de mawnin'!" Mammy Henny had exclaimed. "Why cyarn' you talk some talk folkses kin onderstan'? I b'leeve you makes up harf yo' wuds ez you goes 'long, ennyhow."

"Woman," Alison had retorted, "ye're nae sae fine a judge o' th' Eenglish langweedge that I suld mind ye . . . or ony black body whatever by my way o't."

"Black body! Black body!" Mammy Henny had chortled, shaking with rage like a dark, wine mould-jelly. "It's you' *heart* dat's black, you mean-moufed ole furriner! . . . You ain' l'arned manners f'um yo' Scotch 'leddies,' no how, an' dat's de Lawd's own truf!"

"Truth isna a'ways mannerly," Alison

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had observed, maintaining the granite calm which so maddened Mammy Henny, "but 'tis mighty healthfu'."

"*I dunno* what you mean!" Mammy had snapped back at her. "And I don' b'leeve Gawd *He* knows. Go on talkin' ef it he'ps you. Dey ain' no Chrish'un kin onderstan' you."

"Chreestian!" sniffed Alison, from a high tower of scorn.

"*I said Chrish'un,*" called Mammy, from the doorway. "You cyarn' even call de name uv yo' own 'ligion right! Ha-ha-ha!" And she disappeared in a triumphing relish of negro mirth, leaving Mrs. Stark to digest the acrid fumes of her silent Scotch indignation.

It was two days after her last doctoring of the gray mare, and the poor beast was out of danger, when Trix, accompanied by Joe, went over to "the other valley" to see the Orion colt. Mr. Pyke Ruddle, its owner, lived in a small shanty of a house, in a clearing on the mountain-side, and as they rode up they could see two or three horses grazing on

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a steep field, through which the "home spring" sent its clear waters down to the Blue Ridge Valley that lay below them.

"Now, Joe," warned Trix, swinging herself from her clever pony, "don't you say a word. Just you let me do it all. Look stupid, Joe. . . . Look as stupid as you can. . . . All I want with you is to help me get him home . . . if I decide to buy him."

"Yarse'm, yarse'm—*I* knows. . . . Trus' *me*," said Joe, and proceeded to water the horses, while Mr. Ruddle advanced to greet his mistress. He was a long, lank, gray, clay-stained man, like one of the winter weeds about his dwelling, and he held the classic stick in his hand, at which he whittled as he came forward.

"Mornin', marm, mornin'," said he, changing his quid and spitting discreetly to one side, before he reached her. "Come tuh see that thar 'Rion colt o' mine, I reckon. All squar an' fyar between us et all times, Mis' Bruce, marm."

Trix met him with a candor as disarming. "Yes, it's the colt sure enough, Mr. Ruddle," said she. "Can I see him now?"

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“Sart’n’y, marm, sart’n’y,” said Mr. Ruddle, moving a few feet away and expectorating on the other side. “One er them little buzzud birds done tole me you was a-comin’ hyah, an’ I hed that thar colt penned up fuh you this mawnin’. Hi! Jinny! . . . Tell Mose tuh lead out the ’Rion colt. Mis’ Bruce, hyuh, wants tuh cyars’ a eye over him.”

Then it was that Trix held her breath, for she set high hopes on this scion of the locally famous stallion—and when Mose appeared leading the roan she continued to hold it, so far above even her highest hopes was the splendid beast that confronted her. Just sixteen hands he was, with a line from muzzle to tail that would have made Hogarth reconstruct his famous line of beauty; ribbed up to his hips . . . a child could just have laid a hand between them . . . with a back and loins to have carried Alexander III. of Russia like a toy, and a crest like a flexed bow. The powerful, not too long neck, springing superbly from the high withers, swept forward into a small head that seemed to end it as with the snap of a whip-lash—at least

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Trix could think of no better simile for the vivid, dart-like head, poised high, like a snake's over the most perfect throttle she had ever seen. And what a shoulder! The light slid along it as along an oblique slab of wet, blue slate—a shoulder to land you as on springs over the biggest drop in two counties. His legs, clean and flat at the sides as an open hand, seemed made of steel and rubber, and the big round hoofs kept leaving the ground, with soft, elastic motions that set in play every firm muscle in the lithe body, under its sheath of grape-blue satin. There were burs, alas! in the fine floss of mane and tail, but he wore them like a king parading in beggar's clothes on some holiday. It seemed, indeed, as though he regarded life as a holiday, squaring his red nostrils and looking far out into the wide air with an eye that quivered with brilliant malice in its great socket.

It was this eye that gave Trix pause for an instant, though she denied it to herself the next, and subsequently to every one else. Then she decided on her course. Hers was not the method of ordinary dealers.

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"He's a beauty, Mr. Ruddle," said she. "There's no mistake about that."

"No, *marm*—I don' reckon thar's no mistake 'bout that," acquiesced Mr. Ruddle, whistling soberly.

"He's sound, I suppose?"

"Ez a gole dollar," said Mr. Ruddle. "You kin have all the vets you wants explorin' uv him, if you likes."

"I'll just look him over myself after a while . . . thank you," answered Trix. "But how about his manners? . . . Is he kind? . . . Has he any vices? . . . Any tricks? . . . You know, Orion's colts haven't a very good name for temper, Mr. Ruddle."

"Wellum," said Mr. Ruddle, sharpening his stick to a careful point and then squaring it again, "the fac' is, he *is* a leetle hasty at times . . . wants his own way, you know But lor! All women an' hawses ez is wuth shucks is that a-way . . . 'scuse *me*, *marm* . . . but it sart'n'y is so."

"Yes, that's all very well," said she, "but what I want to know is if there's any real meanness in him?"

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“He ain’t no man-eater . . . I’ll answer fo’ *that*,” said Mr. Ruddle.

“How is he in the stable? . . . Does he fight the other horses?”

“Jes ez quiet ez a baby in its cradle. . . . I reely don’t think he’s got a mite o’ reel meanness in him, Mis’ Bruce, marm. He’s sorter wile like a’ times. . . . Jest look at him! . . . What else could you ’spect from a critter like that thar?”

And Trix, who had never stopped looking at him for an instant, decided that the birth-right of sheer, “plumb” amazing beauty was his to be “wile like at times” over, without undue criticism from less favored beings.

“That’s all right,” she said again. “I don’t mind *that*—but I must know him a lot better before I decide to buy him, you know.”

“Git friends with him all you want,” said Mr. Ruddle, benevolently; “the more you know him the better you’ll like him, or I was foaled only yestiddy an’ don’t know a mule-colt from a zebry.”

Trix now went up to “git friends” with the three-year-old, who sidled away from her at first, and then stood spread, blowing long

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blasts of inquiry from his scarlet nostrils. He finally let her handle him, as all horses ended by doing sooner or later, and explored her jacket thoroughly, and even her hair and cap, in search of the apple or sugar which he was evidently used to.

“Bin a gre’t pet . . . a gre’t pet with all the child’un,” said Mr. Ruddle, condescending to a brief smile. “Reckon Mose hyah ’ll take tuh the trundle when Frank goes. . . .”

“Oh!” cried Trix, horrified. “You’ve never called him *Frank*, Mr. Ruddle?”

“En why not?” asked he. “‘Frank’ ’s a mighty sound, hones’ name, an’ wouldn’t hurt no hawse. I dun’no’ ’zackly *how* he come tuh be called Frank, though. . . . Hit jes sorter growed up with him.”

“He sha’n’t be called Frank if *I* get him,” said Trix, really nettled at the idea of such a horse with such a name. “One might as well call Julius Cæsar *Fred*,” she ended, scathingly.

“Wa-al,” said Mr. Ruddle, agreeable to all points of view, “I dessay his women folks did shorten that name of his’n fuh home use. You cyarn’ picture his fambly settin’ roun’ th’ table an’ his wife axin’, ‘Julius Cæsar,

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please to parse the butter,' kin you, now? Hyah! Hyah!"

But Trix was absorbed in picking up the great, clean feet, with their springy frogs, one after the other, and singing a little song of pure triumph in her heart as she did so.

"You won't find nothin' *thar* you couldn't eat off'n same ez off'n a clean plate," remarked Mr. Ruddle, with quiet security. "That's a *hawse*, Mis' Bruce, marm, an' the mo' you 'zamine him, the mo' hawse you'll fin' him."

This turned out to be so, and Trix finally retired to a snake fence in the company of Mr. Ruddle, and producing a jack-knife from her pocket, began to whittle too. There was quite a little pile of shavings about their feet when they had finally come to an understanding, which was to the effect that Trix was to have the roan for a week's trial . . . "bein' ez we're sich ole friends in the bizness, an' you bought a many colt from me an' paid cash," said Mr. Ruddle. . . . Then, in case she decided to keep him—and well Mr. Ruddle knew what her decision would be—she was to give him five hundred down, with a consideration for the first cup that he won.

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“That’s a big price for him, you know,” she had said. “And I won’t pretend to you that I would sell him for ten times that if he turns out as I hope he will, . . . but you see, Mr. Ruddle, you’ve got to take into account what my handling of him will mean, and his feed and keep and expenses from place to place, and the name I’ve made for such things, in case I ever want to sell him. . . .”

“Uv co’sse, uv co’sse,” replied Mr. Ruddle. “*You ain’t think I ain’t think of all that, hev you? Thar, you jes go ’long easy in yo’ min’.* An’ if he don’ yank all the ribbons from the Yanks fuh you, then *my name’s Frank, an’ not his’n!*”

With which parting pun Mr. Ruddle slouched slowly back to the shanty, dangling the empty rope which had held the stately head of the ’Rion colt.

IV

IT was ten days after the 'Rion colt's arrival. Mr. Ruddle had been paid his five hundred, and Trix was in her own room, in stays and petticoat, sewing madly on the machine. Her time was as brimming over as usual, for she had to finish a just-begun white satin gown for the Richmond German by Monday (it was Thursday), a habit for the next day's drag, and to be ready at four o'clock to go over to the schooling-ground with her new purchase. Tim stood near her, hands behind back, watching the darting needle in that deep fascination that all machinery had for him. As the wheel whirred, and the needle stabbed, and her pretty feet, bare, in their red slippers, worked the treadle vigorously, Trix's thoughts ran back and forth like the shuttle in a loom. . . . First the drag shot forward in her mind.

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. . . What a nuisance it was that the foxes so seldom ran straight in that county . . . taking to the mountains . . . little idiots! . . . and turning the hunt into a sort of Alpine expedition! . . . Then that horrid way, the local people had of "marking" them "so's to know 'em ag'in," if they decided not to kill . . . snipping off a bit of an ear or nicking a brush. . . . And the hounds! . . . Poor brutes! . . . lugged to the meet in a crate, and then dumped out yowling and howling, to catch the scent as they pleased, while the field plumped after them or on them . . . it was nip and tuck as to which . . . heedless of the master's infuriated yells . . . while the first whip (Trix herself) tried to bring things into some sort of shape. . . . No . . . one thing was certain. . . . She whisked out the white satin bodice and looked frowningly at a little oil-drop that was spreading on it near the bottom. . . . Well . . . thank Heaven, that part went under the belt at any rate! . . . Then click! . . . And it was under the needle again and the lever down, and a seam as smooth as bonny-clabber running up its glossy side. . . . No . . . one thing was certain. . . . She

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must have some hounds of her own . . . six couple, say, to begin with. . . . Joe could be first whip and Ashton second (she would teach them the true use of horns at a covert, too—not a toot that didn't mean something, either on her side or theirs), and she would be Master . . . the first Lady-Master in America . . . hurrah! . . .

“Laws, muvver!” said Tim, jumping, “you cert'n'y did scare me.” But Trix had already snipped out an armhole that she wanted larger and was busily sewing it up under that flashing, intelligent-looking needle that so thrilled Tim's heart.

. . . She would have a big lot wired in for them, and open kennels, and she would exercise them herself, with Joe and Ashton in attendance . . . Joe was so “reserved” and reasonable—he'd make a splendid first whip—no cutting into of young hounds for a babyish fault and very little rating. Then suddenly she began to giggle softly, as she remembered her first venture in hounds . . . years ago . . . before Tim was born. . . . What a lolloping, trolloping lot they had been, to be sure . . . ten in all, skirterers and babblers

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mostly, of which three, however, ran mute, and the rest after sheep, chickens, rabbits, even calves and pickaninnies. . . . She had kept them at the mill, and Mrs. Parley had come up one day to say, with tears in her eyes, that "Uther them houn' dawgs must go or she'd hev to. . . . She couldn't keep a aig to her name . . . let alone a chicken. An' they tuck the meat off'n the table and had killed her spotted kitten only that morning. . . ."

"But *this* time," said Trix to herself, finishing the other sleeve, and taking her feet from the treadle to run scales with her cramped toes, "*this* time it will be different. . . . I must break it gently to Sidney, though. . . . He'll have a fit at first, I 'spect."

Then whisk! . . . from bed to machine-table, and the white satin skirt was under the needle this time, and the small feet, now slipperless, again on the treadle.

"Oh, that beauty! . . . that beauty!" It was the "'Rion colt" of which she was thinking now. . . . "That gorgeous king of the horses . . . Lord! what a commotion he'll make when I've got him in shape and first ride him into a show-ring." And her conscience smote her a

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little over that five hundred down. . . . "He's worth a cool thousand at the very least, just green as he is. . . . But then Ruddle couldn't have got it to save his life. . . . Couldn't have smelt five hundred even 'cept from me. . . . Oh, it's all right. . . . Certainly it is," she wound up, and paused for another moment to ask Tim to bring her a glass of water.

The room in which Trix was sewing, her bedroom, was quite unique. There could not be another like it in this unoriginal world. It was on the ground floor of the house, in an odd wing, and on each of three sides there were two windows, arched at the top and set above with Colonial "fans" of white wood. Of these six windows, two, of course, looked toward the stables, and from where she sat sewing Trix could glance out over the slanting lawn into the stable paddock and see the colts at play and the heavy brood-mares in a near field, grazing languidly, and patiently awaiting their spring families. This room was lined with a square panelling of wood, painted white, and around it, hung against the panels, ran a series of old hunting prints. . . . The famous moonlight steeplechase, where sport-

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ive "bucks" in their night-shirts leaped river-like brooks, and charged bullfinches which only an elephant armed with spikes for war could have got through. And some funny old French bits, hung there, one strongly suspected, only to accentuate the superiority of the Anglo-Saxon in all things pertaining to the gentle art of "Venerie." . . . And in between these prints, within hand's reach, pet bridles, pieces of show harness, riding-crops, tandem-whips, odd devices, . . . some invented by Trix . . . for subduing "pullers" and "borers." The portières of gray chamois-skin that hung before two closets looked like some queer sort of mail, with their array of burnishers and bits. . . . On a saddle-tree to one side was a favorite Champion and Wilton that Trix was stuffing herself, because they didn't do it to suit her in New York, and she hadn't the time to send it all the way to London. In a big basket to the left was a feeble March lamb that had come into a chilly world too soon, and that Trix and Tim fed at regular intervals from a bottle with a sponge in it. On the hearth-rug lay Nibs and a strapping Ayrdale puppy of six

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months, and on trees along one wall were riding-boots, black and brown, in every stage of muddiness and polish, awaiting the knowing hand of Trix herself, who would trust no one else to care for them.

A corner bookcase held her well-worn library. No danger of false backs or uncut pages here. . . . *Jane Eyre* cheek by jowl with *Stonehenge On the Horse*; *Kim* hobnobbing comfortably with *Mr. Jorrocks*. . . . *Under Two Flags* tucked away between Captain Hayes' *Through Stable and Harness-Room*, and his work on *The Breaking and Management of Horses*. . . . Whyte Melville, still contented in his *Riding Recollections* and the company of *The Cream of Lestershire*, and below him, on two shelves, the whole set of his novels. *An Irish R.M.* and *All On the Irish Shore* were ranged with the *Badington Kennels*, while on a little side shelf, by themselves, Horace and the Bible lived in solitary state.

But the crowning wonder of this room was the bedstead, which Trix, herself in a creative mood, had designed and had made to order. Anything more incongruous or out of key with the rest of the apartment can scarcely be

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imagined. It looked like the fruit of some gaudy nightmare materialized under the cunning hand of a mad hatter. It was enormous, squat, and broad . . . like a flat island of white enamel and wrought brass in the sea of troubles that swelled about it. It had little rails here and little posts there, and rivets and bands of brass, that seemed of no use whatever . . . and a hard, sharp edge that bit the knees of the unwary who sought to mount upon it. . . . It choked up the room, and no mattress could be invented to fit it that didn't cave in toward the middle after a month's use. Stodgy and gaunt and glaring, it domineered over the rest of the trim furniture, like an old town dowager over an assembly of country mice, and Trix, in her heart of hearts, doted on it as one of her chief achievements, despite Sidney's sarcasm, and cherished it fondly, polishing its brazen splendor with her own hands and her pet chamois-skin. Such is the weakness of the master painter who thinks that he can better compose Oratorios.

"There, Tim," she said, finally, snipping off a thread with her white teeth, small and sharp as a young vixen's, "run along to the



"THERE, TIM, RUN ALONG AND TELL JOE TO SADDLE THE 'RION COLT'"

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stable and tell Joe to saddle the 'Rion colt' . . . *can't* think of a proper name for that horse! . . . with my second-best saddle, and get Horace for himself. I'll be ready in twenty minutes now, just as soon as I give this stuffing a stitch or too. . . . And hi! . . . Wait! . . . Tell Ashton to bring along the two ponies, and Gleam and Firefly. . . . Run now! . . ."

She seated herself astride a little three-legged blue stool that she had used as a baby to eat her porridge off of, and fell to with squared elbows on her saddle, just as Sidney, patting a square of manuscript into shape, entered by the door of the dressing-room.

"Very busy?" said he. . . . "There's a bit here I'd like to read you . . . if you've got time. . . . My stars, Trix, you do look a duck like that! . . ." And he stood watching her with a little smile of proprietorship, as she swung to and fro, punching in and pulling far out the huge needle with its waxed flax thread. Trix was built more like a beautiful boy than a woman, with an arched chest, flat, muscular back, no hips, and pretty, thin flanks, and as she moved her arms and

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shoulders in the stiff bit of work that occupied her, the muscles ran to and fro in ripples under her white skin.

All her dark red mane was bunched on top of her small head to be out of the way, and a little "beauty spot," generally covered by the big plait, called for a kiss on the nape of her bending throat. Sidney promptly answered its summons, and Trix, as promptly, stuck him quite hard with her needle.

"Hands off," said she, "if you want me to criticise. . . . I can't play Juliet and critic and mend a saddle all at the same time." But Sidney was decidedly inclined to be sentimental.

"What a little vixen you are, Trix!" said he, pinching his pricked hand, but still smiling. "You've got the prettiest, queerest eyes . . . just the color of Brazilian beetles they are. . . ."

"Thanks," said Trix. "Why don't you put that in a book? . . . 'She turned on him her beetle-like eyes swimming with affection.' . . . That would sound original, don't you think?"

"It would sound very untruthful. . . . I

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can't fancy your eyes 'swimming with affection' . . . Wish they would. . . ."

"Well, they won't," said she. "Why don't you read me what you wanted to? . . . I've really got to go in a few minutes. . . . I can't keep that 'Rion colt standing a second."

"Well . . . here goes," said Sidney. . . . "See if you like this any better than the last. . . ."

And he read her a labored and ponderously facetious description of the advance of a subtle, many-sided heroine through the newspaper building where the hero was at work.

Trix laid down her needle, and, clasping both hands behind her head, leaned back against the saddle and looked up at him.

"Sidney," she said, "why don't you stop trying to write first in this style and then in that, and write just as things come to you? One day it's Henry James, and another Stevenson, and another . . . yes . . . to-day it's George Meredith. . . ."

"What do you know about George Meredith?" asked Sidney, nettled, as usual, and as usual listening to her.

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"I know a-plenty to know that's trying to be like him . . . in his manner . . . you see," she went on candidly. "I did read *Diana of the Crossways* once because I began it, and I like to finish things when I begin 'em. I took it up because 'Diana' and 'Crossways' sounded as if there might be hunting in it somewhere. . . . Oh, you can snicker! . . . but I remember enough of it to know *that's* meant to be like it," and she flipped the manuscript with an impudent forefinger.

Sidney looked disconsolate.

"Right you are," said he. "It's a fact. . . . You've hit the nail on the head, as usual. . . . The fact is, I've come to a sort of a sticking-place where I'm critic and writer in one, and tear every single sentence I write to pieces, and then patch it together again in some other man's way. I wish you cared more about such things, Trix. You're an awfully clever child. . . . I know you could help me."

"I do care . . . I can help you," said she.

"Well, then?"

"'Catch 'em alive! . . . Catch 'em alive! . . . Catch 'em alive! . . .'" she chanted, taking up her needle again. "Take living, breathing

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men and women that you're interested in, and plump 'em into a book. . . . Don't fuss so about their clothes . . . the style you dress 'em up in, you know. You just end . . . *you* do—I don't mean those other writers that know how—but you just end in having a lot of stylish dolls moving about. . . . My stars! What a pun! . . . I vow I didn't mean to make it, Sidney. . . . *Don't* kiss me. . . .”

“It sounds mighty easy,” said Sidney, accepting her rebuff with resignation. “*Just* be natural . . . *just* be easy . . . *just* be simple . . .”

“You used to be all three . . . before you decided that you had a career,” said Trix, astutely. “You remind me of something I heard once about the Japanese . . . that they say their prayers looking at their own eyes in a mirror. . . . You're just praying to Fame and staring at your own eyes in a glass all the time, Sidney. That's what's the matter with you. . . . That's why you don't like your own books . . . and that's why people won't buy 'em. And then, dear me, Sidney! . . . You've such a harem of heroines that aren't like any one in the heavens above or the

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earth beneath or the waters under the earth. . . . At least, not like any one *I* ever saw . . .”

“Don’t you care at all for Clothilde Gormington?” asked Sidney, rather wistfully.

“No, *I loathe* her,” said Trix, energetically, “self-conscious, abnormal, morbid, weird-eyed thing! . . . I know she never took any exercise, and wouldn’t know a horse’s head from his ‘hurdiess,’ as Alison would say. She’s always curving among cushions, or ‘slithering’ . . . whatever that is . . . through twilight shadows . . . and talking chapters of dull subtleties with that anæmic Brosslethwaite. I can’t think *where* you get your names, Sidney. . . . I loathe them too . . . Michael Brosslethwaite and Clothilde Gormington. . . . Why, they’re enough to kill a book in themselves . . .”

“I thought they were rather good, do you know,” said Sidney, still more crestfallen. “I . . . er . . . made them up.”

“Well, they sound like it,” said matter-of-fact Trix. “And the people do, too . . . sound made up, I mean. . . . Dear me! What

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a beautiful case of 'subtle jealousy' I might get up over your heroines, Sidney . . . there never has been one that had even a hint of me in her . . . great long-legged, full-busted, die-away creatures. . . . who read the *Symbolists* and talk in broken sentences. . . . And you do fall so in love with 'em while you're writing about 'em. I do believe when you kiss me you think you're kissing your last heroine. . . ."

And she laughed and glanced up at him shrewdly out of the gold-green eyes that he had likened to Brazilian beetles.

"What nonsense!" said Sidney; but he looked uncomfortable, and Trix, pursuing her advantage, ran him into a corner.

"Why don't you put *me* in a book?" she asked, teasingly. "I'm alive and real, and if you made me talk and act naturally, you wouldn't have time to agonize over 'style.' . . . Do put me in a book, Sidney . . . beetle eyes and all!"

"If I could do it successfully, I'd make my fortune, you little 'warmint,'" said he, with some thoughtfulness. "But I couldn't. . . ."

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You're beyond my humble pen, Beatrix Bruce."

"It's 'cause you don't know or care enough 'bout horses," teased Trix, who always said "'cause" and "'cept" and "'bout" and "'zactly" when she was much in earnest. "Come along with me to the schooling-ground this afternoon, and see the king of all the horses do his stunts . . ."

"Would you really like me to?" said Sidney, whose head felt hollow and fluffy with much putting together of word-bricks without the straw of a natural style, and to whom the unusual prospect seemed really pleasant.

"'Course I would," she said, and smiled at him. Trix had a little, slanting eye-tooth which sometimes caught her red upper lip when she smiled, and gave it a tantalizing quirk, very charming.

"I can't help it, Trix . . . be nice," said Sidney, and bent and kissed her again. But she did not rebuff him this time.

"Poor old boy . . . looks *werry* tired," said she, kissing him back very nicely indeed. "Come along. . . . You shall ride your beloved

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Ben Bolt . . . the disgrace of my stables . . . and I won't say a word against him."

Ben Bolt was a singular nag that had belonged to Sidney when a boy, and the two hung together with an affection as curious as the horse's appearance and character.

V

THEY went down the flag walk to the stables, Trix swinging her hands happily first before and then behind her, and singing bits of Horace at him as they walked.

“But fling aside delays and thoughts of gain (of fame, Sidney), and mindful, while yet it may be, of the dark fires, mix with your meditations a brief folly: ‘’tis sweet at fitting times to lose our wisdom.’”

“You’re the oddest mixture,” said Sidney, regarding her curiously. “How in the world do you keep all that Latin in your horsey little brain? Mine’s clean gone, except for understanding very familiar bits, and I got a first B on it at the University, too.”

“As to that,” she said, “I couldn’t scan or parse or understand a line of Virgil to save my life . . . but I’ve had these bits by heart since I was fourteen. I b’lieve I was

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cow-girl, or a goat-girl, or something of the sort on Horace's farm. . . . That's why it sticks so, I suppose . . . his verses and farming, both. Look at that, Sidney, and forget your novelling, and be just happy like a horse and me."

And waving a brown hand toward the rolling fields, now misted with the green of young oats and grass, she began her little, gay sing-song again.

"'Keen winter is melting away beneath the welcome change to spring . . . and the herd no more delights in its stall nor the ploughman in his fire, and with hoar-frosts the meadows are not white. . . . Around you a hundred flocks bleat and cows of Sicily (of Herefordshire) low; for you the mare trained for the chariot (show-ring) raises its neighing.' But here we are, and there's the 'Rion colt.' . . . Now just 'cyars' yo' eye over him,' as Mr. Ruddle would say, and tell me if he wouldn't console George Meredith himself for a neglected chapter."

The "'Rion colt," haughty and condescending, was regarding the distant landscape with head flung high while Joe saddled him.

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Occasionally he gave a disdainful flick at the ground under him, as though saying, "How is it that I stand on mere clay? Tiberius would have shod me with thrice-refined gold," . . . and once or twice he gave a sort of whispered nicker, as though calling to some dream-mate that haunted for him the throbbing spring horizon.

"By George! He *is* a stunner," exclaimed Sidney, as much impressed as even Trix could have desired. "*I* mayn't know a horse's head from his 'hurdies,' like my heroines, in the technical sense . . . but I know outrageous beauty when I see it. . . . Lord! Trix . . . You ought to win a gold cup with that chap. . . . What are you going to call him?"

"That's what bothers me night and day," said she. "I can't find a name for him, try as hard as I may. I've thought of dozens, but none of them fit. Can't you help, Sidney? A 'man of letters' ought to be able to help . . ."

"'Splendour' wouldn't be bad . . . would it?"

"'Splendour' . . . 'Splendour' . . . Yes . . ."

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No . . . That is . . . No, I don't think I like it. Try again . . ."

"Something suggesting his color, perhaps. . . . He's the most wonderful color I've ever seen. . . . Like blue steel . . . or no, that's too commonplace. That sort of a wonderful gray-blue one sees over the moon sometimes when it's rising after a hot day. . . . It's . . ."

"Sidney! . . . Oh, Sidney! . . . You're a brick . . . a *gold* brick. You've got it. He's going to make the most wonderful fencer, too, that ever was. . . . Over-the-Moon . . . Over-the-Moon. . . . That's your name, my eighth wonder of the world. How do you like it?"

And she went up and flung an arm over the roan's great crest, and tickled the little velvet-lined pocket in his upper nostril, while he nuzzled her affectionately and made a purring sound that asked for sugar. She gave him two lumps, which he proceeded to crack on her open palm, and then eat daintily bit by bit.

"And see how gentle he is, Sidney . . . kinder than a bushel of kittens. . . . What do you say now, Joe? You old prophet of trouble . . . with your dismal tales about the

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"Rion colts.' . . . Look at that eye. . . . Does it show any white? . . . Come, speak up."

"Nor 'm—he don' show no white to he eye," assented Joe, very reserved in his manner and concentrating his attention on the balance-strap. "Only sometimes he jes look at you kynder dark an' fixed, like he thinkin' what he *kin* do tuh you when he git good an' ready."

"Oh, you make me infinitely weary, Joseph Scott!" said his mistress, with vexation. "Here, I'll hold Horace and Over-the-Moon. . . . *What* a name for you, you darling! . . . Thank and thank you, Sidney. . . . Go on, Joe. . . . I've got 'em. . . . Go on and bring out Ben Bolt for Marse Sidney."

Then, while Joe was alternately coaxing and cursing that weird steed from his box, she proceeded, in a rush of self-reproachful affection, to make much of her favorite hunter, who really held the chief place in her heart over all new-comers, no matter how wonderful.

Horace was a huge, upstanding half-bred black, over seventeen hands, with a shoulder like a slanting hill, and legs and feet as sound

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as we like to think our currency. He had a plain, sensible head, with just a quirk of the Roman in his nose, and the most knowing eyes that ever looked through a bridle. "Children all," he seemed to be saying, "trust to me. I am Socrates and Solon, with just a pinch of Aristophanes thrown in to make me a thorough sport."

Trix adored him for many reasons, having bred and schooled him herself, but chiefly because once, when she had got hung head down in the days before her apron safety-habits, and the hounds were running, he had stopped when she whistled to him and implored him by name, and stood there, nosing her and trembling in every fibre, but stock-still, while the whole field swept past, with the exception of two kind Samaritans, who had come to her rescue and set her head-up again in a giddy world.

"Why don't you let me get you a big sound heavy-weight, like Horry here?" she said to Sidney, eying his nag discontentedly, as he was lugged forward by Joe, yawning away from the bridle, and rolling a sulky eye back toward his comfortable box. "It makes me

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downright ashamed to see you scuffling up on him from the off side. . . . And *what* a mouth he's got . . . Lord! . . . And *what* a trot! . . . It's a marvel to me how you two keep together. . . ."

"We understand each other, old lummux, don't we?" said Sidney, with fatuous affection, patting the grim Campagna nose as he went around to the wrong side to "scuffle up," as Trix unkindly put it. The cranky beast turned and blew at him as he got up, and then took a nip at his foot as he put it in the stirrup. "Just chuck him under the chin, Joe," said Sidney, nervously; "he bruised my ankle like the dickens last time. Woa . . . there! You old home of the vices."

Ben Bolt batted down his ears, set up his back, and had a side kick at Joe as he went back to help Trix up on Over-the-Moon.

"You go on ahead, Sidney," she called, while Joe tossed her into the saddle, and Ashton argued with the roan, who was inclined to rear a bit when he was mounted. "I won't have that old ferry-boat barging into my horse. . . . You go on until mine gets quieted down, and then mind you keep the whole

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road between us. You ride behind me, Joe. Ashton, you and Dick bring over the ponies and the two others. Now . . . go *on*, I tell you, Sidney!"

The roan, after two or three plunges, settled down to a sort of "hifalutin" walk, in which he bent low his head, and eyed the road beneath him as if inquiring again whether it really could be dirt that they were asking him to step on, and at last Trix ranged up alongside her husband, and they proceeded on their way, Sidney keeping gingerly to the fence and glancing at the roan from time to time with a certain air of distress.

"Well," said Trix, after a while of this, "what are you looking for? . . . Blemishes?"

"Don't be huffy, Trix. You know he's an out-and-out beauty, and, after all, I'm not quite a fool, though I wasn't born with equine gumption. . . . But, Trix . . . now don't go off at a tangent . . . do you know I think there's something in what Joe said. . . . There's a very secretive and menacing look in that horse's eye at times. . . . You can giggle all you want to . . . but there is. . . ."

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"My *poor* Over-the-Moon," said Trix, with lofty superiority, cossetting the horse's flexed neck, "did he know he was 'secretive' and 'menacing,' poor darling!"

The roan quivered and tossed his head, and that sort of lambent flicker, as of a restrained malice, trembled through his full eye.

"You're on his back. . . . You can't see his eyes as I can. . . . I tell you what, Trix, please don't go trusting that moke too far. . . . Please now. . . . I'm serious. . . . I know the reputation of Orion's colts as well as you do . . . and that's one of 'em. . . . Take a poor husband's humble advice and . . . don't forget it. *Look* out!" he ended, nervously, for Over-the-Moon, using his planted hind feet as a pivot, had reared and wheeled, caroming on Ben Bolt, who clacked loud teeth at him in a luckily unavailing bite.

"What's the matter with him now? . . . What's he doing that for?" asked Sidney, with irritated nervousness. "Any one but you would have been in the road. . . . That's a sweet sample of his company manners. . . ."

"Sidney, you're a goose," said Trix, politely. "Can't you see it's that spot there in the road

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where they've been burning brush? Your own horse don't seem to like it much, either," she ended, giggling, as, catching sight of the white circle of ashes for the first time, Ben Bolt gave a loud snort of outraged confidence, and, starting backward, drew Sidney's leg along the snake fence as a boy draws a stick along a paling.

"What idiots horses are, anyway!" said he, fretfully. "There isn't enough fire among those ashes to light a cigarette with, and just look how they're going on. This fool beast has dragged half the buckles off my puttees . . . Trix! . . . For the Lord's sake be careful!"—this, as the roan seemed about to climb a big catalpa-tree near by, and then flung around, rearing again.

"*Don't* bother me," said Trix, through set teeth. "I've got to get him by this or he'll be ruined. Just keep out of the way. . . . Ride back a bit. . . . Ride back." Again she tried to get the roan past that, to him, terrific pale danger with its red underglow, and again he reared and wheeled. After that she kept him moving in such quick circles that he could not get his feet from the ground.

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"You mustn't forget he's a colt, Sidney," she said, between breaths.

"He ought to have a good strong whip to him," returned Sidney, sitting still and pale in a corner of the snake fence; and to his surprise, for Trix never carried a whip, and had been admonishing Over-the-Moon with her open palm, she replied, quite meekly for her:

"Yes, I dare say a moderate thrashing is what he needs. . . . Wait, I've got an idea. . . ."

She pulled the roan sharply about, and sent him back down the road with a sharp smack on his sweating flank. The road forked here, and the next thing that Sidney saw of her, she was coming at a hard gallop along the other branch, assisting her horse with a stout hazel-wand, to which some of the leaves yet clung. Amazed, indignant, and unable to stop himself, Over-the-Moon was borne past the dread object in the road by his own impetus.

"There . . . *that's* settled," she said, with satisfaction, as she calmed him down, and Sidney caught up with her again. "I don't

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like his rearing, but, after all, he's a colt, as I said. . . ."

"A three-year-old isn't exactly a colt, Trix," objected her husband, who had had an extremely bad quarter of an hour. "It made me downright sick to see you whizzed about in the air on that great brute's back. . . ."

"Oh, he'll be all right! . . . You'll see," said she, confidently. "Bless me, Sidney, he's as green as grass, if he is three years old. . . . What can you expect of a family pet, who's only been jogged to the 'country store' by an old man, or ridden bareback to water by children, and never had a feed of oats or a good grooming until two weeks ago? . . . You wait till the autumn. We'll show you what's what then."

"What is it you are going to do with him this afternoon?" he asked, unconvinced, and still strongly distrustful of Over-the-Moon.

"Just going to take him round the ring a bit, and jump him two or three times. . . . Joe's jumped him, but I haven't yet. . . . My glory, Sidney! . . . Wait till you see him. It's over the moon indeed with him when he sails into the air. . . ."

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"I wish you wouldn't. . . . Have you got to?" he said, unhappily.

Trix scoffed at him.

"D' you think I bought him for a hack for Joe? . . . 'Course I've got to."

"But if you could only ride alongside him and watch his eye. . . . It looks as if he were making all sorts of dark compacts with Fate . . . if she'll just give him a chance. . . . I don't mean it's the ordinary, mean, crazy, rolling eye of a vicious horse . . . but there's something ominous and reserved in it . . . that sort of 'wait till I get good and ready' that Joe mentioned."

"You and Joe are both sillies," said Trix; "perfect old mammies, both of you. He's got a beautiful, great, clear eye, like a stag. Don't talk any more nonsense, but just open that gate for me. He's a little jumpy still."

With prayers and threats, Sidney managed to prevail upon Ben Bolt to allow him to open the gate and hold it while the roan dived through as though about to launch himself into space.

VI

IN the narrow lane which they had now entered, between the bull's lot and the sheep-sheds, a new adventure awaited them. Toward them, at a full run, came a thoroughbred brood-mare, with spring in her veins and eye, and Trix just managed, with a wild view-hallo and a flourish of her hazel-bough, to turn her aside and set her tearing back in the opposite direction.

"I don't like this," observed Sidney, succinctly. "Not at all."

"It wasn't exactly pleasant," replied Trix, and here Over-the-Moon joined in the conversation by rearing high his head, and giving a long, piercing squeal like a stallion.

"Great Scott!" cried Sidney. "*What's* the matter with that beast?" And even Trix looked bothered. She thought to instil some manners into the roan by a slash or

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two with the hazel, and a scolding, "What 're you doing there?" but his only response was to strike out vehemently with one fore-foot, and emit another squeal more piercing than the other.

"It's nothing . . . just that silly mare," said Trix, shaking him together, and giving him another taste of hazel; and, in truth, he went quietly enough the rest of the way, and settled into a long, easy canter over the grassy rise that led past Parley's house to the schooling-ground. Sidney, however, still eyed him askance, and wished heartily that she was on Horace, and they were both taking a nice, domestic ride along the beaten road.

This schooling-ground of Trix's was a most charming spot. The level and grassy top of a high hill had been enclosed, with posts and rails, in a big circle, and fenced-in jumps set along either side, leaving an exit to north and south. Below them spread the rich pastures and corn-lands, running through every shade of tawny red, and sheening here and there, as the light wind swept over them, with a lustre as of shot silk, under their gauze of

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young spring green. On three sides soared the crescent of mountains, diaphanous and dream-like behind the gold-dust of an April haze, and far away to the southward the sea of woods stretched faint and languid and mysterious to the sea of waters.

Trix sat gazing on it, all the dumb passion of the real country-lover in her eyes, . . . even the roan forgotten for a moment.

“Think what that will look like in a few days . . . just think,” she said, and pointed with the hazel-bough to the orchards climbing to right and left of them, along the hills where Oldwood stood.

“Don’t you love it, Sidney? . . . Don’t you love it? . . . No. . . . You can’t love it as I do.”

And she gave an embarrassed little laugh over what she felt had been a sentimentalism, and came to herself, or rather was brought to herself by Over-the-Moon, who showed symptoms of impatience.

The other grooms had come up by now, and Trix sent two of the quieter horses around the ring, with Dick and Ashton on their backs, while she prepared to follow with the roan. He went, as he had come the last part of the

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way, quietly enough at first, and took the first two jumps in beautiful form . . . so much so that even the reserved Joe exclaimed, "Gre't day! . . . dat *is* suppin'!"

And Sidney, the uninitiated, cried out: "Well done! . . . He *is* a winner! . . ."

Then began the trouble. All at once, without any warning, when he seemed to be going like a beautiful bit of clockwork made by some idle deity for his high diversion, the roan swerved, and rushing to the side of the course, laid his chin on the rail and refused to budge.

They saw Trix using every known art of cajolery and wise coercion, and still, with his obstinate and beautiful head glued to the rail, Over-the-Moon stuck it out and never a budge would he budge.

"What the devil's the matter with him?" asked Sidney, anxiously, of Joe. He had that nervous apprehension of the sedentary, and saw, in fancy, Trix shooting skyward in a sort of explosion of blue roan should the beast ever decide to move again.

"De matter is, he need a fus'-rate lammin'," said Joe, darkly. "I'd jes like tuh git *my*

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han' on him. . . . Miss Trix's *too* sweet wid him. He don' need no 'lasses in his'n . . . he needs pepper, an' he needs it bad. . . ."

"Do you think he's vicious, Joe?"

"I dun'no' 'bout *vicious* . . . he *cuyous* . . . moughty *cuyous*. . . . Dyar now! Miss Trix done pull him out . . . but he need heap mo'n dat. . . . Dat sut'n'y is one fix-minded hawse. . . ."

Trix was taking him around the ring once more now, and he went tolerably well at first, then tried to swing back to his chosen rail, and as she forced him on, reared. She rode toward them finally, with the horse's head drawn toward her stirrup-foot, to keep him on the ground, and condescended to consult with Joe a little.

"You oughtn't tuh let him *git* dar, tuh begin wid, Miss Trix," was his verdict. "Dat hawse want tuh know fum de fust who's boss. . . ."

"Yes . . . that's all very well," said Trix, "but did you see his eye? . . . It's all pale blue and clouded. . . . He seemed to be possessed. . . . Look out!" she ended, sharply, and Joe sprang back just in time to escape the roan's

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fore-foot, with which he struck out violently, again giving that wild, stallion scream.

"Miss Trix . . . You lis'n tuh me," said Joe, seriously, looking down at his coat, from which the iron shoe had nicked away a bit of cloth. "What dat hawse need right now is a *man* on him. . . . You know what I means, Miss Trix . . . 'tain't nothin' 'bout *you*. . . . You kin outride us all any day . . . but he needs somebody on him what kin slip off'n him when he r'ars, an' what can everlarstin'ly chunk him over de hade ef he begins his foolishness 'bout dat fence."

"I b'lieve you're right, Joe," said Trix, whose entire reasonableness made her the horsewoman that she was. "I b'lieve it's just a man that he needs on him this afternoon. Here, change saddles . . . put mine on Horace . . . and then, after we've watched you awhile, Marse Sidney and I'll have a quiet jog together."

This exchange being effected, they rode outside the ring, and then drew rein, to see Joe come to clips with Over-the-Moon.

Over the moon it was for a while, and hey-diddle-diddle, with the cat and the fiddle

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thrown in. Round they swept, the lithe figure of the mulatto sitting the splendid beast as a bubble rides a wave . . . then they came to the destined rail for which the roan seemed so to hanker—and they heard Joe’s open hand smack on the great jaw, and smack and smack again. Over-the-Moon gave it up as a bad job, but plunged and reared so that twice Joe slipped from his back, and then remounting in a twinkling, haled him round again. Thus it went for some twenty minutes, until at last the ring was twice covered without a fault, and the man dismounted for good, and stood soothing the fiery force that man was born to dominate.

“*That’s* all right,” said Trix, and her sigh of relief was deep and grateful. “Good boy, Joe! . . . Thank you. . . . He’ll be much easier to-morrow. . . . I’ll handle him in the morning instead of waiting.”

“Handle him!” cried Sidney. “My God, Trix! You’re never thinking of going on with that brute after this! . . .”

Trix looked at him, and, as often when confronted by Sidney’s ideas, her small mouth fell apart in a little ring of stupefaction.

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Then she shut it with a snap and turned to Horace.

“The matter with you is, Sidney,” she remarked, concisely, as they rode off toward the “flat-woods,” “that you see too much of books and too little of your wife. . . . ‘Go on with him!’ Why, I’d go over the moon with him, sure enough, before I’d give him up. Come on . . . let’s canter. We’ll be late for dinner.”

Over-the-Moon’s sire, Orion, was a descendant of Herod, and had been imported to Virginia by a very sporting old squire of the other valley, so that the roan had blood of both the Byerley Turk and the Darley Arabian in his sheening veins, to say nothing of the Flying Dutchman. That he was a “Rion colt” was unmistakable, for that sire stamped his get with his very image and superscription. Trix believed him to be thoroughbred himself, but it was some time before she could coax Mr. Ruddle into an approximately accurate account of his dam. Had he, Mr. Ruddle, bred him? No. Did he know where he had been bred? “Not

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'zactly . . . that is, he knew *whar*, but not *heaw*."

It turned out, finally, that he had accepted the roan, when a foal, in part payment of a sum owed him by a poor farmer-lad in the valley. This lad's all was a little holding on the mountain-side, a plough-horse, and one old mare—"a moughty, ramshackle, ole black myar, with one eye switched out by a briar," was Mr. Ruddle's description, "but good p'int's . . . darned good p'int's . . . I reckon she was the roan's ma . . . but they ain't no knowin'."

"Didn't you ask?" said Trix.

"Ov cose . . . an' he sez ez how she wuz . . . but they ain't no knowin'," he repeated.

"I'm going over and see him if he's there now," announced Trix. "Do you know whether he's still there?"

"I ain't heard of him sence then," said Mr. Ruddle. . . . "Owed me six dollars mo', too . . . but t'would 'a' cost mo'n that to go trapeezin' arter him."

She did go eventually, but boy, plough-horse, and black mare had all disappeared, and no one knew where to, or anything else

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about them. "It's a blow, old man," Trix confided to Over-the-Moon on her return; "but never mind. It's written all over you. . . . Every inch of you talks louder than all the papers in creation. Still . . . I'd love to have you registered. Well, nothing's perfect in this world . . . except you."

And the roan tossed high his head, and gave his whispering nicker, as though saying: "Well, rather. . . . It seems to me needless even to mention it."

More and more she wondered how the horse had escaped being sold long before she bought him. Mr. Ruddle's explanation was simple in the extreme.

"I wa'n't jest *hoanin'* to sell him nohow," said he, "an' thar couldn't nobordy back him 'cep'n me an' the child'un t'well *you* got a-holt uv him. I wuz thinkin' all along ez how he wuz jes' the hawse fuh you an' them hawse-shows, Mrs. Bruce, marm, an' that's the sober truth."

"Well, I'm mighty glad it happened like that," Trix had said, laughing. "Let me know the minute you have another."

"Well, marm, talkin' 'bout snails . . . thar's

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that sorrel filly you keeps pitchin' inter . . . I tell you that's a prime myar."

"Mr. Ruddle," Trix replied, firmly, "that mare has a doubtful leg, and you know it. It's all very well to say it's 'only passin'.' She might be like Miss Kilmansegg, and have a *golden* leg out of kelter, but a horse with a leg is no horse to me. It's just a leg-owner, and *I* won't be. . . . So that settles it."

And so ended Mr. Ruddle's connection with Over-the-Moon and his hopes for the sorrel filly.

VII

IT was a lovely April morning about eight o'clock, and Mammy Henny was taking advantage of it to iron and flute some of Trix's mannish little blouses. The door of the laundry stood wide, and the pleasant smell of the warm ironing-board floated out and mingled with the scent of the fresh earth and opening buds. In the doorway sat Alison knitting a golf stocking for *her* nursling. There had been a tacit truce between the two women for a week past, but in Alison's face there was a certain dour look this morning which promised trying moments for Mammy Henny should they differ in opinion.

Outside, the bees were "brumbling" about the young lilacs near the door, and occasionally one would light on Alison's forbidding hand, but she never even paused to shake it off. She was one of those whom bees do not sting,

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and rather proud of it in a dark and hidden way. Inside, the water tottled in the great copper boiler, and against its glowing, dented surface the bloomy black of the old negress' head detached itself like some dark fruit in a still-life painting.

Mammy was singing while she worked, and the language of her hymn stirred Alison's deep disapproval:

“Why don’ you do like Peter done,
When he walk upon de sea?
He turn his face tuh Jesus an’ sayed,
‘Oh, Lawd, ’member me!
’Member de rich, ’member de po’,
’Member de bond an’ de free,
An’ when you done ’memb’rin’ all roun’,
Good Lawd, ’member po’ me!’”

“Thon’s an unco’ irreeverent sang to begin the day wi’,” she remarked, during a pause. “Never siccan a word said Peter. An’ ye suld ken if ye dinna what’s writ in the Buik.”

Mammy Henny was staring at her with the usual puzzlement caused by her language, for Alison broadened her Scotch, but not her mind, whenever she spoke with the poor

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woman, deriving from her bewilderment Heaven knows what grim and cross-grained satisfaction. She now quoted, in a stern voice, words from "Revelation":

"And if ony mon shall take away from the words of the buik of this propheecy, God shall take away his pairt out of the buik of life.'"

"I 'clar' I dun'no' what you after, Mis' Stark," said Mammy Henny. "I ain' done tuk away no wuds, nor put 'em in, nuther."

"There's naebody sae blind as them what wanna see," said Alison, tersely; "but a' thae things ye black folk sing gar me scunner."

"Ain' onderstood one wud," said Mammy, curtly, and went back to her fluting-irons.

It was in this interval that Tim appeared, hugging a fat parcel to his chest, and followed by Nibs, who did not approve of him, and was mortally jealous besides, but who knew that as Trix's property he was to be looked after.

"Oh, Mammy!" cried he, "I got some-thin' jes splucious for yo' washin'. . . . Jes look a-here. . . . It's the fines' in the market an' jes as *cheap!* . . ."

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He whisked by Alison, whom he did not greatly love, and extended a small packet to Mammy Henny.

“What is it? . . . I ain’t got my specs, honey.”

“It’s ‘Blurine,’ Mammy, an’ *heaps* better than old bluin’ for washing clothes with—an’ you can make ink out of it too . . . an’ dye . . . an’ if I sell fifty packages . . . oh, Mammy! . . . I’ll get a ’lectric machine. . . . It’s only ten cents for one emberlote.”

“Gre’t day in de mawnin’! . . . Who done tole you all dat?”

“I saw it in a paper . . . and I writted to the people, an’ it was true . . . an’ this is the ‘Blurine.’ . . . Don’t you want some, Mammy dear? . . . It would make your washin’ *heaps* easier. I do hate to have you work *too* hard, Mammy . . .”

“Ye’re the bairn for whillywhas, whatever,” remarked Alison. “Am I no’ to ha’e ony?”

Though she did not show it, she was fond of the child in her hidden way, and his bringing up by Mammy Henny had been a sore trial to her.

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"Ye sudna' be aye coddlin' and cossetin' him," she had said to her one day. "There's mony a braw rapscaillon made i' that fashion. What he lacks is to be weel whaukit on his hinder-end frae time to time."

"I s'pose you means whacked on his po' leetle settin'-down," Mammy Henny had replied. "Well, I ain't never lowered my han' to give him a lick sence he was bawn, an' I ain't gwine tuh now."

"He maun dree his ain weird like a-body else," Alison had said, dourly. "But he'd be no the waur for a bit cleishin' twa-three times a week."

"Go on talkin' yo' cuyous talk—*dat* don't hurt nobordy," Mammy Henny had responded. "But hol' yo' han' . . . or *we'll* come turrer scuffle. An' I got a moughty good mustle fum choppin' kindlin' an' heistin' water."

"Oh," Tim cried now, in a gush of gratitude, "will *you* buy some, too, Nurse Ailie? . . . Oh, I 'clare that cert'n'y *is* sweet of you!"

And he whipped an arm about her grim scrag and kissed her violently on the ear before she could ward him off.

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“Hoots! awa’ wi’ ye!” she said, extending her bunch of bright needles. “Ye’ve deaved me for a’ day . . . ye daft wean.”

“But you *will* buy one . . . mebbe two or three? . . . *dear* Ailie?”

“Ye’ve the tongue to souk the laverocks out of the lift, ha’e ye no’, Maister Whillywha? . . . I’ll buy ae packet o’ trash, nae mair, nae less. Thaur’s your siller . . . a when bawbies for ae bit packet o’ trash.”

And she took ten cents from the netted purse that always hung at her belt and gave it to him. He would have embraced her again, but she presented needles at him, so to speak.

“Awa’ wi’ you an’ your figgle-fagglin’. Ye hae your siller, noo gae ben the hoose an’ put it by like a canny lad, or ye’ll get nae mair frae me . . . nae matter how I’ll be needin’ it.”

“You sut’n’y is hard on dat po’ lamb, Mis’ Stark,” said Mammy, coming to the doorway to watch her darling’s progress to the house with his first earnings. “How you *kin* be, beats me.”

“If ye’d beaten him when he desairved it, ’twad be mair to the point. No discipleneing whatever has he had, puir bairn. Aye rin-

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nin' about hither an' yon like a fey thing, an' warplin' an' warstlin' wi' a' the bit blacks on the place. 'Tis no bringin' up for a gentleman's son . . . mair's the peety. But Gude kens, we suld be thankfu' he wasna born wi' a mane doon his backbane, an' a dockit tail to his puir bit hurdies. 'Tis nae wonder forbye that sae mony horse-gowans blaw i' th' fields hereabouts. Horses first and Chreestians second. 'Tis that suld be writ ower the hoose door."

"You sut'n'y kin talk scan'lous 'bout yo' own white folks when you gits r'ady," said Mammy Henny, outraged.

"Woman," replied Alison, "it's no the talk that's scandeelous; it's the facts."

"I ain' no 'woman,' an' don' you call me so. . . . I done tole you dat befo'," snapped the other.

Alison's cold gray eye summed up the fertile outline of her adversary, so reminiscent of that of Diana of the Ephesians: 'If ye're no a woman, ye're an unco' guid immeetation o' one," said she.

"An' *you'se* a moughty *po'* one. De Lawd sut'n'y did mek yo' talk an' yo' bordy tuh

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match . . . one's ez hard an' sharp as t'uther. But, blow high, blow low, I ain' gwine hev you callin' me 'ooman,' and dat's flat. . . . I'll speak to Marse Sidney 'bout it ef you gwan, jes ez sho' ez I live. So now."

"It's by-ordinar," said Alison, meditative-ly, watching her, as she banged irons in and out of the fire, and spat on them as though they were the causes of her indignation. "It's by-ordinar how a' black-bodies fuff like gibbie-cats when they're angered. Wha'd a thocht a woman wu'd be angered at bein' ca'd a woman?"

"An' I tell you right now dat I'm 'bout wo' out wid hearin' you call ev'y cullud-pusson a 'black-bordy' . . . I reckon if yo' had a leetle mo' Bible-l'arnin' you'd hole up on 'black' an' 'black-bordy,' 'caze I gwine 'stonish you right con'sid'able now. . . . *Moses, he hed a black wife!*"

"Hoots! Keep me! The auld limmer's horn-daft!" ejaculated Alison, dropping her knitting, the better to observe Mammy Henny at bay. "Dinna ye fear the wrath o' Gude, that ye tak' the name o' His prophet in vain?"

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“‘Hoots’ yo’s’e’f,” retorted Mammy Henny. “I kin show it tuh you in de Bible.”

“Ablins ye can and ablins ye canna,” said Alison, much taken aback, but concealing the fact successfully.

“I’se *able* all right. . . . Jes’ you wait a minuit twell I git my specs. Br’er Thompson preached ’bout hit yestiddy—an’ he’s a young cullud gen’man uv l’arnin’ . . . book-l’arnin’, too. He ben to Harksorn College in Richmon’, an’ to Hampton School, too . . . an’ *he knows*. . . . A Ethyoppian is a black pusson . . . an’ dat’s de kynd Moses he up an’ mah’y. De tex’ am Numbers, chapter twelve an’ varse one . . . an’ soon’s I kin hitch on dese specs I gwine show hit tuh you.”

The kinky gray head in its plaid kerchief and the sleek flax-and-salt poll almost pressed together in a fearful and temporary amity, while Mammy Henny’s knubbly black forefinger dug at each word as she read it aloud, to make it more impressive:

“‘An’ Miriam an’ Aaron spake ag’inst Moses because of the Ethyoppian woman who he had mah’ied; for . . . he . . . *hed* . . .

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mah'ied . . . an . . . Ethyoppian . . . woman.
Dyar now! . . . Whut you mek outer *dat*?
. . . We may be 'black' an' 'niggers,' but
Moses done mah'y one uv us . . . dey ain't
no gwine' back o' dat, caze hit's in de Bible.
. . . What you say 'bout it? . . . Mh? . . ."

"I canna' say that I'm preceesely astonish't
at Miriam and Aaron," said Alison, slowly,
"but I will admeet that I'm sair disappointit
in Moses. He that had the gift o' spaein'.
I suld a thocht he wad a' spaed yon sur-
prisin' deespensation and ta'en measures
accordingly."

"Well, talk hit up an' talk hit down, or
talk hit hind part befo', what he done was
tuh mah'y a black woman. You seed dat
thoo yo' own specs . . . ain't you?"

"Thaur's somewhat wrang wi' the trans-
lation. . . . I he'a nae doobts about that. Or
ablins Ethiops waur white in thae days.
But what I hau'd by the strangest is that
rod of his. Dod, that waur a powerfu' rod,
Henny Miner!"

"What you mixin' up de rod wid it fur?"

"Woman, dinna' ye ken that a rod that cud
turn the hale air to blackness for three days

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cu'd turn ane black woman white for as lang at it pleased Heaven to let her bide?"

"Tu'n her white?" said Mammy, staggered.

"Aye," replied Alison. "I'll believe in a when muckle meericles or yet I'll believe that Moses foregathered wi' a black woman. Forbye, as I first said, I doubtna' the translations a' wrang." And that was all the satisfaction that Mammy Henny got out of her astounding revelation of Biblical history.

Alison's prejudice against the negroes was deep and strong, rooted in nationality and tradition, for had she not known since a wee lass that Auld Hornie often appeared in the likeness of a "muckle black man"? "I wadna lippen to ony woo'-heid" (for so she called them to herself) "that was e'er born. They're a' sib to th' de'il. . . . 'Tisna in the nature o' Proveedence to fessin up muckle guid in sic a covering. Night and day, gude and bad, black and white, they're a' set apairt by His ain decree. . . . Na, I wadna be ower-trustfu' wi' ony—weans or grawn folk."

But at present, despite her cranky mood, she was disposed to smooth Mammy Henny's ruffled feathers, for there were certain things

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that she wanted to find out, and only through the old negress could she get the desired information.

She opened the conversation in this wise:

“Yon’s a wild, rampaugin’ beast that our leddy’s sae daft about the noo. Are ye no frichtit tae see her on him?”

“My young mistis’ could ‘a’ rid one o’ them fiery hawses whut tuk ’Lyjah tuh glory,” said Mammy Henny, loftily.

“Aye, she’s a grand guid horsewoman; a’ the wairld kens that.”

Mammy Henny was mollified at once.

“Well, tuh tell you de trufe,” she admitted, “I *does* git a *leetle* skeered sometimes. Joe he say dat hawse got de debble hid ’way in him somewhar, en’ some day hit comin’ out. . . . ’Twa’n’t de hawse skeered me so much ez Joe’s sayin’ dat. . . . He moughty ecomerle of his wuds, Joe is. An’ dat mean a heap fum him.”

“’Tis a fearsome-luikin’ beast whatever,” Alison said. “I mind when I first saw him I thocht he had a singular ee to his heid. And ae day I luikit him in the shine o’ th’ ee, and he glowered back at me like a man. The

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mistress suldna be triflin' wi' sic ramstougerous bestial and she as she is the noo."

"Dey ain' nuttin' de matter wid her ez I sees," said Mammy Henny, tartly.

"Oh, woman," said Alison, "d'ye think I've a clout afore my een? Twa auld wives like you an' me suld think shame to theirsels gin they couldna see through a bit ither woman wha'd like fine to keep a secret a' the wairld maun ken, suner or later."

"I don' hole wid nosin' 'round to fin' out things 'bout people what dey ain't tole you," said the other, with superiority. "Miss Trix sut'n'y would be good an' mad ef she think you was guessin' 'bout her dis-a-way."

"I'm no guessin'; I'm knowin'. I'd be a horn-tammie gin I didna know. And when I see her tossit up like a ball on to that flaunty, skellochin' beast, it gies me a cauld grue."

"I tell you Miss Trix 'ud give you wuss'n cold gruel . . . I s'pose dat what you means . . . ef she could hyah you. . . . You better not go hintin' 'round her. She was moughty perky and standoffish 'fo' leetle Marse Tim wuz bawn. 'Twa'n't nobordy dyah say a

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wud to her 'cep'in' 'twuz me. . . . An' I ain't say many, *I* kin tell you!"

"Wad ye let her gang to her deith for fear of a bit whirliwahw of temper? . . . Wad ye let her risk her life . . . and the bairn's . . . for lack of a bit courage? . . . I gi'e ye warnin', woman to woman . . . an she gangs this gait muckle langer, *I'll* speir whaur she's gangin' an ye winna."

"You heap better go out dyah right now an' stick yo' hade in a hornick's nes'," said Mammy Henny. "You'll do yo' own ways, uv co'se, like you alluz does . . . but I wouldn't be in yo' skin furrer heap while you'se doin' hit."

And she gathered up the beautifully fluted blouses and departed to the house.

VIII

TRIX was well content these days. The Percheron had turned out splendidly. Over-the-Moon was learning his lessons slowly but surely. "Thoroughbreds always take longer to school—but they just saunter in when the half-breeds are dead beat," she had informed Sidney, when he commented on some backwardness in her favorite. The crops were most promising, and many foals had arrived upon the scene. It was a "sight for sair een," as even Alison admitted, to see them wheeling about their dams in the big paddocks, all lush and green now with the May, little stilt-legged browns and fawns, with funny, fuzzy docks, that looked more like fox-brushes than horse-tails. Some were the cocky offspring of the coach-horse, King Hildred, and sailed about with heads and tails up as though practising already for the ring; the

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rest were airily fleeting little bloods, that got over the ground, to quote Alison again, "as light as sae mony scuddin'-stances ower a pond." For of late this strange person had begun to take an undeniable interest in the equine members of the Oldwood family. She would lean on the rails near the paddocks with her knitting and watch the new-comers for an hour at a time, and occasionally she bestowed an apple at arm's-length on some of the yearlings that came up to investigate her.

Indeed, the horse-fever seemed spreading at Oldwood this season, for Sidney, too, had a sharp attack of it, in a literary way, and it was at this time that Tim made his one sporting *bon-mot*. It had occurred when queer old Mrs. Clarke, who had a weakness for anisette cordial, while waiting one day for her hostess to appear, had gone nosing about in the pantry—lured by the smell of a paregoric bottle that Mammy Henny had left on a shelf after dosing Tim—and being short-sighted, had pressed the lofty plumes of her bonnet into a sheet of fly-paper.

"Muvver," Tim had whispered, after the

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disconcerted lady had been released, "she was 'featherin' on a scent,' wa'ant she?"

"Well, you ought to have hopes of him after that," Sidney had chuckled.

"Not a bit of it," Trix had answered, with mournful insight; "it just shows that he takes the whole thing in, and don't care a hang for it."

As for Sidney's venture in the "horsey" line, Trix had broken it to him about her idea of keeping a pack of hounds and being Lady Master; and after the first to-be-expected outburst the title of Lady Master had so fascinated him as the possible title for a story that he had announced his intention of writing one.

"I'll read up thoroughly, of course," he had replied to Trix's frank whistle of amazement, "and then you can look it over and see that it's all right. But mind you, Trix, it's perfect nonsense about your hunting your own hounds . . . just see what that Englishman, Benson, said about it when you told him—and *you know* he knows."

"And *she* saw I saw *Esau*," chanted Trix, lightly. "I don't care what Benson, or John-

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son, or Thomson, or any other son of man says," she declared. "I'm going to do it, and it 'll be well done, too."

"But it's impossible, with all the other things you have to do. . . . You know Benson said it was a life job in itself, keeping hounds. . . . Don't be pig-headed, Trix."

"I . . . am . . . going . . . to . . . have . . . a . . . pack . . . and . . . hunt . . . them," said Trix. "This Albemarle clay's the very thing for kennels. . . . All the best men hold by clay. . . . It's destiny."

For the present, however, her hands were quite full enough with Over-the-Moon, whom she hoped to have in shape for the autumn horse-shows, and two yearlings that she chose to exercise alternately on a lunging rein along the roads—two beautiful fillies by the same sire, as like as their reflection in water, and destined to win for her cups and blue ribbons galore. Trix rode the confidential Horace, and a prettier picture could not be fancied than the three made, swinging off down the slant, green lawn through the long afternoon shadows of the locust-trees, Trix poised like a

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white bird in the saddle, Horace pretending to be mighty serious and responsible, with this flighty young thing dancing along at his crupper, and the filly, now trying the slack of the crimson rein, now darting alongside, full of oats and spring and good-spirits and good-will.

It was this sight that sent Sidney to his study one afternoon before he was thoroughly up in horse-lore, for, as he told himself, "it was a bounden duty to put her in print." Such a chance did not come to many writers.

The result of his afternoon's labor he read to Trix that evening while she embroidered. She said that she "got the jumps in her fingers" if they were idle for a moment. The story was to be a short one, and he had plunged *in medias res*, to get down his impressions while the fit was fresh upon him. Trix settled herself, cocked attentive little ears, and the reading began.

"I call it *The Lady Master*," he said, clearing his throat with some embarrassment. He found it rather more trying than he had thought it would be to read an amateur's attempt to so keen a professional.

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“Well, do go on,” she responded, “I’m really burning to hear it.”

“Of course it ’ll have mistakes . . .” he said, nervously.

“Of course,” coolly. “I’ll do all that over for you.”

“Well . . . here goes,” said Sidney, and plunged ahead as follows:

“‘This girl, who looked like a boy, was mounted on a superb sorrel gelding fifteen five in height.’”

Trix dropped her work, and her mouth fell apart, but she did not interrupt him.

“‘And about them clustered a seething mass of sound, fleet dogs, with their curved tails set scimeter-like with excitement. . . .’”

Trix’s mouth seemed frozen into a pink round, for she had not shut it yet.

“‘No flirting, maggoty lot were they, no chanting, chattering crowd, but a throng of wise old-timers who meant business. But even as it was, this girl, a huntsman born, and keener than they, winded the fox before they did. . . .’ What’s the matter, Trix?”

And he stopped abruptly, fixing a discontented eye on his wife, who as usual with her

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when in extreme throes of mirth, was laughing literally to tears.

"Of course, I knew you'd have to look it over," he said, smiling rather one-sidedly. "But what's as wrong as all that?"

"How . . . how . . . how high did you say that horse was, Sidney?" she gasped, when she could speak at all.

"Fifteen five. . . . It's a very good height, I think," he replied, with some stiffness. "I don't see anything to go into spasms over about it."

"Sidney Nelson Bruce . . . do you mean to tell me that you don't know 'a hand' measures four inches? It's . . . it's . . . perfectly incredible!" said Trix, and she was off again.

Sidney looked a bit sheepish.

"That was rather a break," he admitted. "But what else?"

"Hounds don't have t . . . t . . . tails," murmured she, wiping her eyes on a corner of the blouse that she was embroidering.

"Oh yes! . . . 'sterns' . . . of course! . . . I did know that . . . that was a slip." He corrected it. "Next?"

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"And you mustn't call 'em dogs except for breeding purposes."

"No? . . . That's odd. . . . It seems a very arbitrary sort of dialect, I must say. Next?"

"You have me there," admitted Trix, still chuckling weakly. "I don't know what 'flirting' and 'maggoty' mean. 'Chant' and 'chatter' ain't bad, but I never heard of them either, until now. Did you make 'em up?"

"No," said he, curtly, "I didn't. But I was so sick of the usual terms that I thought these would be an agreeable change. I found 'em in an old thing over at Carter Nelson's . . . all 'f's' for 's's,' you know."

"I'd like to see it," said Trix, sitting up, alert in a moment. "It must be interesting. I suppose 'maggoty' means light-headed . . . crack-brained . . . 'a maggot' in one's brain, you know. . . . And 'flirting' just expresses itself. I must ask him to lend it to me. You think he will?"

"Sure to. But let's get back to this. What's wrong with the rest?"

Trix broke forth again.

"It's a gem, Sidney . . . a perfect gem!"

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That touch about the Lady Master winding the fox is simply . . . simply. . . .”

She giggled so that she could not go on.

“I thought it made it very vivid. People *do* wind foxes sometimes, don’t they? I’m sure I’ve heard of it.”

“They do if they have ’em in a bag.”

“But I know I’ve heard of it.”

“Of course you have. It’s some sort of shrub that they smell, and then they cry proudly, ‘I smell a fox!’”

“And they don’t, really?”

“I’m afraid not. I’m afraid that ’ll have to go out. . . . Unless you publish it as a humorous skit on the knowing green fox-hunter. Why don’t you? I think that’s a really brilliant idea. It’s truly too funny for words. It’ll make a real hit if you go on as you’ve begun.”

And she laughed and laughed again.

IX

IN the mean time Alison kept the things of which she had spoken to Mammy Henny in her heart, and pondered them very deeply. She saw her chance one afternoon, about three weeks after, and availed herself of it with the dour promptitude that characterized all her actions when her mind was once made up.

“I’m no ane to stand haukin’ and swaukin’ aince my fit’s on the way,” she had said to the more timorous Mammy Henny. “Gin I can see the hinder-end of the thing I’m wantin’ I shank aff wi’ a’ my micht.”

It happened in this way:

Trix had ordered Over-the-Moon saddled for her, and as the cynical Benson . . . cynical as to her hunting her own hounds, that is . . . had called at Oldwood that day for a thorough discussion of the subject, she decided that she

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would mount at the front door and ride a part of the way back with him toward his own farm. Alison, from an upper window, was a keenly interested witness of the subsequent proceedings.

Over-the-Moon, who had been stabled for two days owing to a foot that he had hung by kicking in his box, came up saying "Ha-ha!" through squared nostrils, like the war-horse in Job. He had a bloom on him, as Trix had once said, "like a black Hamburg grape," and his sheer radiance struck Benson so dumb with admiration that he left unsaid his master argument against the keeping and breeding of hounds by any woman whomsoever.

Then, after quite a tow-row, Trix had landed safely in the saddle, and smuggled the roan on to the grass, that Benson might get a better look at him. What happened during the next five minutes no one could ever exactly tell. Sidney said that it was Tim's witless bantam cock, who took this occasion to squatter out across the gravel with two of his harem; Joe said that it was "jes low-lifetedness. . . ." Benson thought that she might have touched him with her spur in his giddy whirlings and doublings.

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. . . Trix declared that he had simply "rung his head like a dinner-bell and dizzied himself." The result, however, was that he crossed his legs and came a thwacking cropper on the near side, between the front steps and a big crape-myrtle. Trix kicked herself free in an instant and got to her feet, swinging on to the reins until Joe came to the rescue and got hold of the roan, who seemed bent on following the coursers of the sun up the steep of blue May heaven. The leaping-horn was crushed double, and there was a slight cut down Trix's temple, which bled upon the white linen of her habit and gave things a tragic touch.

Sidney had implored her not to ride him that afternoon, and even Joe had muttered something, while the silence of the judicious Benson spoke louder than words. But they reckoned without their Trix. She had another saddle brought, and was on him again and putting him through his paces on the grass before they could realize that this smoothly moving bit of satin-bound machinery had been behaving more like a daft motor-car than a horse only fifteen minutes before.

"That fall sobered him up, you see," she

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called, triumphantly, as she did high-school eights over the short turf, the beautiful beast changing his lead in answer to the movements of her lithe body.

“Isn’t this doing pretty well for such a wild ’un, after only a month’s schooling?”

So she had a very peaceful jog on him with Benson, after all, and brought him home across a bit of country where she knew the jumps, he behaving like a “chrisom-child” all the way.

“He’s all right, Joe,” she said, as she swung off him on her return. “There’s no real harm in him. . . . I wouldn’t sell him for his weight in emeralds. . . . I b’lieve they’re up just now.”

And she came back to the house, very light-hearted but limping a little, for the fall had wrenched one of her ankles, to be confronted at her bedroom door by fate in the shape of Alison Stark.

“Culd ye gi’e me twa-three minutes when ye’re changed, Mrs. Bruce?” said she. “Thaur’s summat hings heavy on my hairt, though I’m sweer to be troublin’ ye.”

“Why, of course, Alison. . . . I’ll ring for

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you as soon as I've had my bath. No bad news from Scotland, I hope?"

"Na, na, an' thank ye kindly. Dinna fash yoursel' about me. 'Tisna of mysel' I wad be speakin'."

And with that she was gone, to wait in her little dormer-windowed room until the bell rang, with her old Scotch Bible open upon her knee before her unseeing, unspectacled eyes, for the strength of its mere contact.

"Now," said Trix, when, feeling rather tired after her bath, she lay wrapped in her dressing-gown on a sofa, and motioned Alison to a chair near by, "what is it, Alison? You've got me downright nervous with your solemn face."

"Mair like 'tis juist Nature that gars ye feel sae, madam," said she, refusing the proffered chair. "I mind before my Jamie came I was aye flekkerin' like a feather in a draucht gin a mouse cheepit. It 'll juist be Nature, ma'am."

"What on earth do you mean, Alison?" asked Trix, quirking one eyebrow in a way that hinted danger to those who knew her.

"Why, juist that," said Alison, innocently.

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“A’ womenfolk are sib to ither i’ juist that ae thing.”

“Will you speak plainly?” said Trix.

“Weel, I ken that my auld Scotch tongue mak’s lig-lag to your lugs, madam,” replied Alison, deprecatingly, and still regarding her with guileless, pale-gray eyes. “But ye maun juist try to pit oop wi’ it for a wee, and no be lettin’ yoursel’ get fashed wi’ me . . . for that’s the warst of a’ for ye, an’ ye as ye are the noo.”

“I wish you’d say exactly what you came to say to me and get it over,” said Trix, and her hands took a tight grip on the arms of the sofa, for she had a fierce desire to rise and bundle the old woman out of the room.

Alison’s face changed suddenly. The bleak brows came down, and the dour lower lip shot out. Her glance was no longer mild and innocent. She fixed a piercing gaze on her mistress and came a step nearer.

“Aweel, then,” she said, “I’ll nae langer play seek-and-hod wi’ ye, but come to the bare banes o’ the truth. It’s this I’m fain to say to ye, Mrs. Bruce. Are ye no afeared to tempt Proveedence, aye day, as ye’ve been

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temptin' Him, by riskin' twa lives on yon sauvage Sawtan of a beast?"

Trix was on her feet in a moment, facing her.

"Alison . . ." she began, and paused to control herself. Then she said in a cold voice: "I don't think you know how impertinent you are—so I forgive you. But you must not talk to me like this."

She moved as if going to the door, but Alison caught her by the arm, and again her manner had changed, for now it was softened, almost wheedling.

"Oh, my dawtie," she said, her harsh voice trembling, "dinna ye be angered wi' an auld woman wha ha'e diddled your man and your first wean upo' her knee. . . . Wha' for suld I speak but for your ain sake an' ye sae pale an' eerie-like, it cracks my hairt. . . . Ye're but a young, bit thing . . . juist a bairn yoursel'. How suld ye be kennin' the risk ye rin aye time ye get upo' that Warlock beast? And gin I ken, and gin I didna warn ye . . . what for wad I be leevin' and eatin' the maister's bread?"

The ring of genuine pain in the old voice

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softened Trix at once. She laid her hand over the gnarled fingers on her arm and spoke gently.

“I’m sure you mean the very best, Alison,” she said. “I’m sorry if I was cross—but I don’t like people to meddle with me . . . not even with the very best intentions, you understand. So we’ll just forget that this has happened and say no more about it.”

“I’d be sick-laith to anger ye, madam,” persisted Alison, still clinging to the strong little arm that stiffened under her eager clutch in its owner’s effort at self-control. “Sick-laith I’d be to do it, but, oh! I maun try to mak’ ye see the gait ye’re gangin’. Thaur’s a muckle deep bog-land ayont ye, an’ ye an’ a’ our hopes may be smooored in it afore ye ken. Dinna ye gang on as ye’ve been gangin’. Dinna ye ride yon mad, fleysome beast again. . . . Dinna ye do it. . . . Dinna ye do it.”

“Alison,” said Trix, who could be very patient when she set her mind to it, “sit down here—you’re trembling all over, poor soul—sit here, and let me explain to you. You see, you don’t know anything about riding, and what seems to you a savage, dreadful beast

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out of a fairy-tale is just a high-spirited, difficult horse to me, that 'll make a splendid hunter and steeplechaser (that's a sort of race-horse, you know) when I've finished with him. . . ."

"Ou ay, an he doesna feenish wi' you," groaned Alison, all her Scotch composure gone, and the naked roots of her heart bared for Trix to see. "Gin onything misfell you, the maister wad ne'er lift up his heid mair. . . . If ye winna stop for the unborn bairn . . . think o' *him* . . . stop for *him*. Oh, I ha'e grat like a bairn mysel' wi' the thocht o' it, mony's the lang, lang nicht-tide."

And she covered her face with her gaunt hands and sat motionless for some moments in what for her was the equivalent of tears.

In Alison's life there had been one great passion—her love for her master and nursling, Sidney Bruce. Her own sons had grown up and married and left her to make homes of their own, and it was when the last had gone that she came back as nurse to the month-old baby of Mr. Bruce, who had married a Virginia wife and was going to make his home in America.

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“Be reasonable, Alison,” said Trix now, putting a kindly little hand on her shoulder. “I know how you love your master, but then I love him too. You can’t think I’d do anything to hurt him or . . . or . . . any one else. Please be reasonable and trust me to know what is right for me to do.”

“Three bairns o’ my ane ha’e I had,” said Alison, from behind her shaking hands; “three braw lads an’ guid . . . but no ane o’ them a’ warpl’t himsel’ i’ my vera hairt-strings like this bairn that I bore nae pain for.”

She took down her hand, and her eyes were dry and bright as she gazed past Trix, with an eerie look as though seeing some future thing shape itself on the air before her.

“It’s a lesson, I jalouse,” she went on, “ane o’ thae hard lessons life’s aye teachin’ us . . . juist the lesson that the mither-luve’s too godly a thing tae be keep’t only for the weans of our ain flesh.”

Trix spent herself in comforting arguments, but remained firm about riding her “jicky horse,” and Alison had to depart without having secured any promises.

X

THE morning after this conversation Mammy Henny was seated in the little hall between the pantry and store-room, thoughtfully tying up the "palate-lock" of her youngest grandchild. This lock is simply the wool that grows on the extreme top of the head, and when rigidly wound about with cotton thread, so as to stand erect, is believed by negroes to draw up the uvula which has been lengthened by cold or any other cause.

The pickaninny—a winy-brown dumpling of five years—stood with solemn eyes between Mammy Henny's knees while the operation went on, giving a cat-like sneeze every now and then, which wrenched the little warlock from Mammy's fingers, and caused her to exclaim: "Hi, now! You wanten stan' hyah twell doomsday?"

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Upon this scene entered Alison, with the key-basket on her arm, and while selecting the store-room key from among the others, she regarded the process with a lofty disgust.

“Ye’ll hyke the puir bit hizzy frae the groun’ gin ye conteenue,” she remarked, at length. “Sic cantrips wad gar a horse throw his denner up. I canna thole it, Henny Miner. Ye that gang to kirk (or so ye think it) ilka Sabbaith, to be warplin’ the woo’ frae the heid o’ your ain kin wi’ that de’il’s nonsense. Ye micht as weel try to shorten the horns of a coo by yerkin’ her tail as to lift the bairn’s palate by pu’in’ at the woo’ on her pow.”

“De devul ain’ got nuttin’ to do wid it,” said Mammy, unmoved, winding away at the lock, which now stood up like an exclamation-point on the top of the fuzzy little head. “You moughty free wid de devul in yo’ talk. *I* wouldn’t go projeckin’ wid he name like you does furrer heap. ’Sides, I done see too many palates drawed up dis-hyah way to min’ yo’ talkin’.”

“What the puir bagrel’s got is a sittin’-down cauld,” persisted Alison, “and what

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she lacks is hot flannel to her wame and a guid swat betweenesh twa-three blankets."

"I gwine do dat too," said Mammy. "You so pernickerky an' fault-findin', Mis' Stark, cyarn' nobordy please you."

"Hoots! is it please *me*? . . . Why for suld it be pleasin' or not pleasin' tae me? 'Tis not *my* hair is bein' warpl't upright on the tap o' my skull, like an Indian chieftain's. 'Tis yon puir huzlin' bairn I'm thinkin' o'."

And with a deep sniff, expressive of helpless disgust, she unlocked the store-room door and went in.

"Please, ma'am, Mis' Stark," called Mammy after her, "while you in dyar, jes han' me out some brown sugar to fix up a hot drink for dis chile. I wouldn't ax you, but you in dyar a'ready."

"'Tis my belief, Henny Miner," said Alison, appearing in the door with the tin sugar-scoop in her hand, "that ye've a buck-tooth for sweeties in your ain chafts. I gied ye a noggie fu' o' sugar yestreen."

"Go on talkin'—*I* don' min' you—'tis Marse Sidney's and Mis' Trix's sugar, anyhow. I kin eat sugar *an'* coffee in dis house

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ef I wants tuh, so dyar! 'Sides," she broke off, peering at the bulging pocket of Alison's black alpaca apron, "seems tuh me you done got a sweet buck-tooth uv yo' own—fur *white* sugar too. . . an' *lump* at dat. Hyah! Hyah!" and she pointed impertinently, and rolled in her chair with triumphing glee.

"Ye're a feckless puir body," said Alison, with a calm superiority. "Ye hae na the im-ageenation o' a jenny-spinner. Dae ye think I'd mar the gust o' guid tobacco wi' a pocket-fu' o' succar? . . . 'Tis nae for mysel', though ye dinna desairve to be told to the contrar'."

"Lawsie! . . . I wonder what *is* she gwine do wid hit?" asked Mammy of the wide air.

"That I'll tell ye," said Alison, putting a generous saucer of brown sugar on her knee; "not to grateefy your inqueesitiveness, but to hau'd ye frae gabbin' a' over the place, when ye ken what for I intend it. Now hau'd up your lug, an' dinna gae skreikin' when I tell ye . . . an' dinna be pitten fuleish questions. . . . 'Tis for yon fleysome blue horse wi' the de'il in him. . . . Gude kens 'tis no a canny color for a beast. I'm thinkin' he's no a-the-gither canny, wi'in or wi'oot."

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“Fuh Over-de-Moon?” said Mammy, in the hoarse whisper she always used in moments of intense excitement. “Fuh de Lawd’s sake! . . . What done tu’n you?”

“I hae nae turnit,” said Alison, primly, “but it behoves me tae dae my tapmaist to saften yon wild beast’s hairt. . . . I had a grand giftie for the bestial when I waur a lass. I mind thaur was a bullock on the steadin’ whaur I was born . . . a sawvage, ill-gi’en beast like yon . . . an’ a’ the menfolk waur fley’d to gang wi’in a stane’s-thraw o’ him . . . but he wad come to my whussle like a doggy and lap the saut frae my loof. . . . Wha kens what guid power I may ha’e ower this ane?”

“Jeeze!” was all that Mammy could find to say.

“Dinna sit thaur starin’ at me wi’ a mou’ like a kirk door on a Sabbaith,” said Alison, with irritation. “Can ye no say buff nor stye? . . .”

“*Lemme* come wid you!” broke forth Mammy.

“Na, na. Ye’d bauchle a’. I’ll gang my lee-lane to gie that mad horse sweeties, or I’ll

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no gang at a'. I'll na sit on my ain coat-tail to plesure onybody."

"I'd like tuh know whose you gwine set on den?" said Mammy, who gathered correctly that this was a refusal, and was huffed accordingly. "Thank Gawd, *I ain't got one!*"

Here Tim burst from a hidden nook and took Alison's sharp knees into a wheedling embrace.

"I *couldn't* help hearing you, Nurse Ailie," pleaded he. "*Please* lemme go wiv you. Oh, *please!*"

"Na, na," said Alison again, unwinding his arms as composedly as she would have loosed a brier from her skirt. "Ye bide here, my cock-a-bendy. I ha'e heard tell that a' the bestial snack at ye, an' I dinna want a horse's teeth in my loof."

And, leaving the two intimates to talk her over at their leisure, she betook herself with her pocketful of sugar to the stables.

Over-the-Moon had been lately put into a big loose-box to himself, about twenty yards from the main stable, with an enclosure of grass about it, and a running stream at one end. Joe was fitting a padlock to the gate

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of this enclosure when Alison appeared, and Over-the-Moon's arrowy blue head, with the white diamond on its front, was thrust out of the open door.

Joe stood up as Alison paused beside him, and took off his cap.

"Joseph Scott," said she, before he could bid her good-morning, "in what like does a body be ceevil to a horse?"

Joe looked at her with circumspect seriousness, for all the negroes at Oldwood held the old housekeeper in great respect if not awe. It was well known that Marse Sidney's wrath would have descended heavily upon any individual, man, woman, or child, who dared to treat her unbecomingly.

"You mean how tuh git frien's wid 'em, Mis' Stark?" asked he.

"Ay, juist that," said Alison. "What like is yon horse to deal wi'? How will I be best gi'ein' him a bit succar? Will he bite at me gin I go near him?"

Alison softened her Scotch to all but Mamma Henny, so that Joe understood her well enough.

"Nor'm, *he* ain' gwine bite you," said Joe.

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“His meanness don’ come out dat-a-way. He jes ez coaxin’ an’ lovin’ ez a good baby in he stable. He jes save up, look like, fur when de saddle’s top uv him. Nor’m, indeed, don’ you be skeered. Jes go right ’long in, an’ hole up de sugar on yo’ pa’m—flat out, like dis”—he illustrated the correct manner in which to bestow sugar on horses, and held open the gate for her.

The tall, grim figure in its black-and-white print gown passed through, and with an extended palm, on which glistened one of the white morsels that Over-the-Moon loved, approached his box slowly but steadily.

“A bonny lamb . . .” said Alison, in the voice she used only for babies. “A bonny lamb . . .” and then she “whussled” softly as she had done to the “ill-gi’en” bullock so many years ago. Over-the-Moon reached far out his beautiful head and nickered softly.

“Ca’ canny, man, ca’ canny . . .” said Alison, coming nearer, and then, after “praying in” a bit, she reached up her hand and felt the soft plush of the round muzzle against it, and the warm breath flowing down her arm. The roan cracked the lump daintily to pieces

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against her palm, and ate them bit by bit, and she never winced. And then as the smooth tongue licked and licked again at her sticky fingers, "Hech! What a silken tongue ye ha'e, my mannie!" cried she, in surprise. "A coo's tongue is juist a rasp an' file to it."

She gave him another lump, and he ate it in the same way. Then she ventured to stroke him gently on the nose. He started back a little, but came forward again promptly, and just to show his sporting good-will, caught a fold of her sleeve between his lips in a pretended bite. She stood it without a quaver.

"Will I gi'e ye anither, ye daffin' chiel?" said she. "Wha'd think ye waur sic a kittle beast to back. . . . Dod! but ye're a bonny thing tae luik at, whatever."

And she gave him a third lump, which he ate with as much gusto as the first. Then she looked him in "the shine o' th' ee," as she had done once before, when Joe was holding him at the door, but this time she gazed long and deep and at her leisure, and wondered at the dark-blue depths of the great pupil and the length of the lower lashes.

"Gude save us! I culd knit hosen wi'

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your winkers," she told him. "'Tis an unco' thing tae stan' ee to ee wi' sic a beast. Ye've a singular ee, my birky. Thaur's sumpairt drowned deep in it, like a bogle in a well that gars me dinnle tae my backbane. But ye've mighty bonnie ways wi' ye. I'm kennin' better why the mistress is sae daft about ye, sin' I ha'e forgathered wi' ye a wee my ain sel'."

She gave him a fourth lump of sugar, stroked his front again, and went thoughtfully back to where Joe was standing, watching her.

"Noo I want the straight word, Joseph Scott," said she. "Juist hoo dangerous do ye think yon horse?"

"Mis' Stark," he replied, solemnly, "I gwine tell you de Lawd's trufe, 'case I sut'n'y is troubled in my min' 'bout dat very thing, an' mebbe you kin help some. . . . But, Mis' Stark, ma'am . . . I sut'n'y is feared dat hawse gwine kill Miss Trix some day. 'Tain't so bad now . . . but when she try to git him 'roun' a show-ring, *den* we gwine see suppin'! . . . Gre't day! . . . Dat hawse gwine try tuh bre'k thoo de floor uv heaven when he smell all dem

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folkses an' hawses an' see de lights. . . . Dat's what *I'm* skeered uv, Mis' Stark. Dar's a devul in dat hawse, fur all he coaxin' ways, an' he comin' out an' kill somebody sho, one er dese days. Dyar—dat's perzackly what I thinks."

Alison took a lump of sugar, looked at it musingly on all sides, then dropped it back into her pocket.

"Dyar's a local show hyuh in August," Joe announced, "an' she say she gwine try him dyar fust. Den in Siptimber she lay she'll tek him to Cartersburg."

"An' you think it vera dangerous?"

"I think he gwine kill her dade," said Joe. "Cyarn' *you* do suppin', Mis' Stark, ma'am? Marse Sidney don' know nuthin' 'bout hawses . . . 'scusin' de disrespeck . . . but den he don' pertend tuh. An' he see Miss Trix ride sech a chance uv wile hawses dat he don' see de diffunce 'twixt a real devul hawse an' jes a coltish one. . . . Please, ma'am, tu'n yo' min' tuh hit. We-all's moughty mizzuble 'bout hit down hyuh."

"Ye may be sure that I'll dae my tapmaist," said Alison; "but it's a dour beeziness, ony

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way ye glisk at it. What for suld she be sae set on showin' this ane, an' the stable fu' o' ithers wha ken the wark? Juist listen tae them noo! . . . They're sae thrang that they mak' mair clamperin' than the movin' o' a hoosefu' o' plenishment. What for suld she be sae set for this ane?"

"Case he jes 'bout de fines'-lookin' an' actin' hawse in de land when he in a good-humor," said Joe. "I be'n to a heap uv hawse - shows, an' I don' see a chance uv hawses, but I ain't never seen one tuh tech him, Souf *or* Nawth."

"Aweel, aweel," said Alison, slowly, "we maun juist bide a wee an' say our prayers ower it. . . . An' some way will be open't i' th' end, I hae nae doobt. An' I'll juist be comin' tae veesit him mysel' frae time to time. Ilka ane o' us maun dae his pairt tae saft-in the de'il that has his dwallin' in that beast."

"Yars'm—sut'n'y, ma'am," Joe said, cordially. "I sut'n'y will be pleasin' tuh hev you come."

Alison returned to the house in a brown-study, and, as usual, took it out on Mammy

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Henny, who was prinking before a little mirror in the upper hall, having put the grandchild to bed with another pickaninny to watch her, and being now attired for church.

“Henny Miner,” said Alison, folding her arms and regarding the other grimly, “it gie’s me the wame-ill tae see a godly body a’ dinket oot for kirk in a when duds and babs o’ ribbon wad shame a potato-bogle.”

“Dun’no’ what you means,” retorted Mammy. “You’d better not brek de sabbath all tuh pieces quoilin’ wid me, nohow.”

“Why canna’ ye gae tae your unco’ wairship in decent black like a Chreestian body?” continued Alison. “Ye luik mair like ane prepaired tae bow to Auld Whaup-Neb himsel’ than tae your Makker, in a’ thae whirli-gigums.”

“Ain’t onderstood one wud *yit*,” said Mammy, composedly. “Hit sut’n’y is a savin’ uv wrath sometimes dat I don’ tek in mo’ uv’ yo’ tryin’ talk. Why ain’ you r’ady fur chu’ch yo’s’e’f, ’stid er standin’ thar pes-terin’ me? You’re so high-an’-mighty, ’on’t

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nuvver come to de cullud-chu'ch, but got tuh tail off arter Marse Sidney an' Miss Trix tuh de Priscryprians."

"Woman," said Alison, "I'll scunner on my deith-bed wi' the terror o' that ae time that I ganged wi' ye tae what ye ca' a kirk an' sat amidst the clanjamfry ye ca' a congregation. My thrapple was nigh smooored wi' the reek o't, an' my lugs sae deaved wi' the screighin' an' skellochin' that an engine-whussle seemed a whisper for twa weeks after."

"I takes hit you means you don' like my chu'ch," said Mammy Henny, with great good-humor. "Well, I don' keer! You an' de Lawd kin set-tle dat 'twixt yo'se'ves. But tell you one thing, hit sut'n'y does seems strange tuh me how a hard Pezbytarian like you kin go turrer Priscryprian chu'ch tuh wuship."

"Sin' the Laird Beeshop o' Virgeenia ha'e pit his fit doon aboot the papery o' flowers on the altar, thaur isna' sae muckle differ 'twixt the twa," said Alison. "But ye Blackymore Bapteests, that gae slorkin' aboot in a bit burn sae thick wi' red clay

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'tis like paidlin' in taematae-bree . . . an' think ye're wash't frae sin when ye come oot . . . what suld ye know about ony decent manner o' wairship whatever? . . . I doubtna' that ye began your bapteezin' fulishness wi' the hope that some o' th' black on your hides wad come aff wi' the sins."

"Gwan! Gwan! Dat's right! . . . See what you *kin* say 'g'inst e'v'y body but yo' own pizen se'f!" cried Mammy, who had taken in quite enough of this to be in a towering passion. "'Buse my chuc'h much ez you likes! Cyarn' nobordy stop you, lessin' dey tuck de tongs an' wrinch yo' tongue outer yo' jaws. All *I* knows is, dat *yo'* ole Nomeration ain't got 'nuff money tuh build a chuc'h in dis naberhood, an' *mine is!* Dat actin' talk heap louder dan a chance o' yo' low-lifeted Scotch wuds, what must pain yo' jaws gittin' out! So dyar!"

Alison had so little defence to make to this that she sheltered behind a scathing allusion to negro morals.

"Hoots!" said she. "The carlin's in a creel! . . . But wi' a' your sae-ca'd kirk-gangin', ye're nane sae parteekular about gae'n thaur

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for waddins. A' ye Blackmores ha'e mairrit in an owre-boggie fashion—by my way o' t—An' ye'll be unco' late gin ye stand thaur jaundering ony langer, or hide to clapper-claw me, whilk ye luik muckle mindit tae dae. Awa' wi' ye afore ye burst wi' rage! Gae hunt the gowk a' the way to yon barn ye misca' a kirk. Ablins ye'll find him i' the pulpeet!"

"I'se a Chrischun, I is," stammered Mamma, shaking all over in her desperate clutch at self-control. "I gwine right stret along an' pray fuh you . . . you po' whopper-jawed ole Satan . . . 'case you needs hit, Jeeze *he* knows!"

"By the luik o' ye," said Alison, coolly, observing her with deliberation, "it's mair a ban than a bleesin' ye'll be pittin' on me. *Sae be carefu' in whilk deerection ye send your peteetions, Henny Miner!*"

And then, when all had gone to church and the house was empty, Alison, who never did anything without well-weighed reasons, and who would certainly not have stayed away from "kirk" except on some very particular occasion, went down into Trix's room

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and possessed herself of two thick volumes by Stonehenge on the horse.

These she took to her room and studied with absorbed interest, until the sound of carriage wheels on the gravel warned her that it was time to put them back.

XI

THE early summer passed by uneventfully, except for the education of Over-the-Moon, which progressed at times somewhat after the fashion of the frog in the well---one step forward in good behavior and two back. Once he had jammed Joe's leg quite savagely against the fence at the riding-school in a sudden bolt, and once he had reared so at a jump with Trix that Joe had mounted him after she got off, and pulled him over, which made him a much soberer nag for at least a week. Strangest of all, however, in the career of Over-the-Moon, was the extraordinary friendship which grew up between him and Alison. He would nicker when he saw her coming, as he did not nicker even for Trix, who petted him a good deal, and it was a quaint and somehow a touching sight to see the grim old Scotchwoman



WALKING SEDATELY ALONG WHERE THE GRASS GREW THICKEST

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walking sedately along the garden terraces, where the grass grew thickest and juiciest, with the beautiful horse at the end of a lunging rein, he pretending to nip and strike at her, and she pretending to scold him in the tender, teasing terms that she had used to Sidney when he was a wee laddie.

The roan would come to her whistle when he would come to no one else, and never tried to break away, as he did from the others, when she had him on the lunging-rein. In a word, it was the old story of the "ill-gi'en" bullock over again.

"How did you ever come to get up the courage, Alison?" laughed Trix one day, leaning over the garden fence and watching her, as she walked beside the roan, with her hand on his shoulder, while he tore up crackling mouthfuls of the new grass that a heavy shower had brought out.

"Nane mair surprisit than mysel', ma'am," answered Alison, thoughtfully. "It minds me o' the pairrit that Jamie brocht me frae the Indies ane time. When first I glisked at the neb o' the fowl, I thocht I wad hae tae be happit in armor afore I would pit a finger tae

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him. . . . And I wad gae a muckle round out o' my way gin I had to pass him. But ane day he waur screighin' for a sweetie, an' nane ben the hoose savin' me. . . . Sae I endit by gie'n it tae him, an' my hairt duntin' sae hard on my breest-bane I thocht it wad a frichtit him. But na; he juist tuik the sweetie in a wiffin, as douce as micht be, and sune he clamerd on my shooter an' I let him bide thaur, though he piked at my ear wi' that fleysome neb o' his . . . and aye afterward we waur like twa joes thegither. . . . 'Tis an unco' thing how 'twill saftin the hairt tae dae a kindness to ony thing or body. . . . Gin a woman culd nurse a' her enemies through a sickness, she'd hae nae mair, by her way o't when they had won through tae health again. . . . Ye see, it a' began, ma'am, by a bit succar I gi'ed him ane Sabbaith morn."

And she related to Trix her first encounter with Over-the-Moon.

"It's downright touching to see them together, Sidney," said Trix, that evening. "She's a real old brick . . . made with straw of the best, too. . . . I 'clare I didn't know she had it in her. And she was so unreasonable

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about him and my riding him at first. I nearly lost my temper and ordered her out of the room. Why do you suppose she began it?"

"Dear old Ailie is the salt of the earth," said Sidney. "I don't doubt that she thought that since you *would* ride him, she'd do all in her power to tame him as much as possible."

"Well, I'll never forget it," Trix answered, much impressed. "The very first ribbon he wins I'll make her a lovely present in his name."

Fate was very kind to Alison in those days. Every opportunity that she desired seemed to come to her of its own accord, and so one evening she was not surprised to hear her master's voice at her door saying, in the broad Scotch that he had learned as a baby, and that he delighted her by using for a phrase or two on rare occasions: "Are ye thaur, Ailie? I ha'e come for a bit crack wi' ye."

She had taken this chance to tell him all her fears about Trix, and to plead with him to keep her from riding Over-the-Moon in a show-ring.

"Don't worry, my dear soul," he had said,

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kindly. "I've been trying to persuade her already that she must let such things slip for this autumn. She hasn't promised exactly, but then I know her. . . . I think she'll come round. This affair at Ivytown in August is a small thing . . . though I don't want her to ride there, either . . ."

"Ay, dinna ye dae it, Maister Seedney; dinna ye lend yaur face tae it! Joseph Scott hae telled me that 'twad be deith fur her tae ride him in ony o' the show-rings. He's an unco' beast, Maister Seedney. Sae douce an' seelfu' on the leadin'-rein, an' sic a warlock under leather. . . . Thaur's sumpairt no canny aboot him. . . . Gude forgie me, but I hae thocht a bogle gets on him wi' the saddle. . . . Dinna ye let her ride him in ony horse-show, my ain laddie. Talk wi' Joseph Scott. Dinna ye let her do't . . ."

The result was that Sidney did talk with Joe, and afterward with Trix, to her intense disgust and indignation. She took the bit in her small teeth, metaphorically speaking, stiffened her pretty neck like iron, and refused to make a single promise.

"Can't you trust me at least to have *horse*

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sense, Sidney?" she asked, as he urged and pleaded, exhorted and scolded by turns. "Since when have you thought that a negro boy and an old Scotchwoman of seventy know more about horses than I do? You may be quite sure that I shall do nothing foolish, but beyond that I won't promise you anything."

Sidney longed for the days when contumacious wives could be put under lock and key.

"But see here, Trix," he pleaded. "You know I've got to go on to New York to see those publishers about my novel on the third, and I shall be utterly wretched the whole time, picturing you smashed up by that brute. Why won't you wait until I come back, at least? Of course, I know you are a thousand times a better judge of a horse than Joe Scott, but all the same it made my blood run cold to hear him talk . . ."

"Good heavens, Sidney! You'd have icicles in your blood in midsummer if you listened to Joe about every fractious horse that I ride. There's Gleam, now — that thoroughbred hunter—don't you remember how he frightened you out of your wits the first hunt I ever took her on? *Do* be sensible, Sidney! You

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spoil my pleasure—and I'm looking forward so to my first venture in a show-ring with Over-the-Moon."

"But, Trix darling . . . as you are now . . ."

"Sidney, Sidney! . . . Don't you remember I was riding later than this before Tim was born. . . . Oh, I do *wish* you'd stick to the things you know about, Sidney, and not run me wild just when my nerves ought to be quietest."

"I don't mean to nag you, Trix," said he, dreadfully perplexed. "But upon my honor I can't post off to New York, and leave you, thinking that you may have your neck or your back broken at Ivytown. . . . If you'd only wait until I come back. . . . This business matter is so important for us both that I really ought to go. . . . But if you'll just put this off, I won't say a word about Cartersburg if you really tell me that it's not dangerous."

"Well . . ." said Trix, unwillingly, "I won't promise exactly . . . but I think you can about consider it settled that I'll wait for Cartersburg."

So Sidney joyfully went to carry this good

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news to Alison, and the next day left at noon for New York.

“Ride? ’Cose she gwine ride,” said Joe, when Alison consulted him as to his opinion on the subject. “Ef she ain’ mek no sot-an’-fast promise, she gwine ride ef she kill herse’f an’ de hawse too. Dat’s Miss Trix. I’s done growed up wid her . . . played wid her when she wa’n’t knee-high turrer duck . . . an’ ’ceptin’ you git a solid promise outer her . . . she gwine do *her* way, spite er Gawd or de devul!”

“An’ you maist solemnly assure me, Joseph Scott, that ’twill mean her deith gin she does it?”

“I tell you, Mis’ Stark, like I was squar’ in front uv der Judgment Seat—an’ Peter got he han’ on my shoulder—I tells you . . . ef Miss Trix try to git dat roan roun’ a show-ring, she comin’ home foots fo’most. An’ I knows suppin’ ’bout hawses same ez Miss Trix, do’ she ain’ ’lowin’ dat nobody know much ’bout ’em ’scusin’ uv herse’f.”

“Weel, Gude guide us a’,” said Alison, slowly, looking past him, with that eerie gaze

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that seemed to see something from the future forming itself upon the empty air. "I believe ye're an upright, honest lad, Joseph Scott, an' I thank ye for tellin' me the bare truth. Noo it's juist i' th' hands o' Gude an' them He chooses tae dae His wark."

A week later, when Alison was sitting in the laundry door as usual, with her knitting, while Mammy Henny ironed, Joe came, a very troubled look on his face, and said, "Mis' Stark, ma'am, I hates tuh 'sturb you, but will you please gimme some er dat moniak med'cine what holps people when dey nerves is upsot."

"Hech! What's meddled your nairves, Joseph Scott? Ye look unco' composit for a nairvous man."

"'Tain't me," said Joe, gloomily; "'tis dat po' leetle Ashton. He down dyar at de stable cryin' like a baby. . . . Hit's dat ravin'-mad hawse agin, Mis' Stark."

Alison rolled up her knitting and put it in her pocket.

"What's he dune the noo?" she said, getting to her feet.

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“Wellum,” said Joe, “you sees, Ashton he moughty keerless ’bout puttin’ on he saddle. I’s e alluz arter him ’bout hit. An’ ’twuz his tu’n tuh ride de roan back from the Mill. Well, he come ’long all right twell we git tuh de big kitalpin tree, and den Ashton’s saddle tu’n, and whilst he wuz on de groun’ dat devul strike at him twicet an’ squeal like a boar peeg. He ain’t done dat furrer long time now, an’ Miss Trix she say he war jes frightened wid Ashton comin’ plop onder he foots like dat. But we-all knows better. I tell you-all,” went on Joe, with ever-growing gloom, “Miss Trix kin talk twell she bust . . . but ef dat hawse come down wid her in de ring he gwine savage her sho’ . . . An’ she done give us our orders fuh Ivytown dis vey evenin’.”

“For Ivytown? . . . For the horse-show?” asked Alison.

“Yease’m—fur de hawse-show. I dun tell you how it gwine be, ain’t I now? . . . She wuz jes pullin’ de wool a leetle over Marse Sidney’s eyes, so’s he c’u’d go on easy an’ comf’tubble-like tuh New Yawk, an’ not pester her no more.”

“An’ when will she be gaein’?” said Alison.

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“She lay out tuh git off to-morrer ’bout five o’clock in de mawnin’. We-all gwine ride up dyar, an’ Ashton he gwine tek de runa-bout.”

“Aw, Mis’ Stark! Mis’ Stark!” cried Mammy, clutching at her headkerchief with both hands. “Cyarn’ *you* do sumpin’? . . . Cyarn’ *nobordy* do sumpin’? My baby gwine git kilt! . . . My po’ baby gwine git kilt dade!”

And she fell on her knees by the ironing-board and buried her face in the pile of Trix’s underlinen that she had been at work on.

“Eh, Henny Miner,” said Alison, laying a hand on the shaking shoulders. “Ca’ some o’ the Bible weesdom tae mind. . . . Ye’re aye gettin’ blads o’ it by hairt. . . . Dinna greet like a bairn afore aught’s happen’t ye. Gin ye canna reca’ onything tae yaur comfort, I’ll e’en mind ye o’ a vairse that hae brocht me muckle consolation i’ my day . . . ‘By His help I hae lowped ower a wa’.’ . . . The wa’ is afore us, high an’ braid, but by His help we’ll lowp ower it. . . . An’ noo come wi’ me, Joseph Scott, an’ I’ll gie ye the physic for yon puir lad.”

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Mammy wiped her eyes on one of Trix's underbodies and sat down, catching her breath in great gulps like a child that has been sobbing, to wait for Alison's return.

She came back in about twenty minutes with a little bundle in her hand, wrapped in a bit of white silk. "I hae happit yon puir gowkie's shank wi' some auld linen," said she. "For a gowk he is tae pit a saddle on siccan a beast wi'oot prayin' ower ilka buckle. He's mair frichtit than hurt. An' noo I'll juist be askin' the loan o' your ironin'-board, Henny Miner. Ye're in nae state tae fettle tae ony wairk, an' I hae lang intendit tae dae a bit ironin' mysel' . . ."

She took an iron from the fire, tested it with a moist finger, set it on the stand, and began to untie the little parcel.

Mammy Henny was quite roused from her despair by the array of dainty articles, all fine cambric, real lace, and microscopic stitches, that were soon spread upon the ironing-board.

"De Lawd sakes!" she exclaimed, taking one in her pointed brown fingers and examining it with delighted curiosity. "Wha'd you git dese hyah, Mis' Stark? . . . Miss 'Trix ain't

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done hed nuttin' like 'em when she was mah'ied."

"I made 'em mysel'," said Alison, shortly.

"Lawsie!" cried Mammy, with increased admiration. "I didn' know you c'u'd sew like dat. You *sho' is* smart, Mis' Stark. Dey're de cutes' things I ever seed in my bawn days. Miss Trix 'll hev a kerniption over 'em, I reckon."

"They're na sae braw as a' that," said Alison, beginning to press them gingerly, with deft and knowing turns of her bony wrist, but with a certain pleased note in the voice that the sympathetic old negress instantly detected.

"Yease, dey is," she said, generously. "Dey's de purtiest baby-clo'es ever I light on, an' I'se seen a heap in my life, too."

When they were all as smooth as little snow-wreaths, Alison folded them again in the white silk and went toward the door.

"I'll tak' it kindly o' ye, Henny Miner," said she, "gin ye'll come tae my cham'er in an hour's time."

Mammy's jaw fell childishly at this civil address, but she hastened to answer, rather apprehensively:

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"Dat I will . . . I sholy will, Mis' Stark."

"Now what you reckon she got in pickle fuh me *dis* time?" she asked of the surrounding furniture, her eyes fixed on the powerful, gaunt figure as it moved toward the house.

Alison went straight to Trix's door and knocked. A worried voice with some irritation in it said, "Come in," and she entered to find Trix perched among a mass of papers at her writing-desk, in the little shabby blue dressing-gown that she always wore when hard work was ahead of her.

"Oh . . . is that you, Alison?" said she, in another tone. "I thought it was one of those silly stable-boys come to bother me again. What do you want? . . . Can it wait? . . . I'm dreadfully busy now . . . all these bills to get straight and farm-hands to pay before leaving to-morrow . . ."

"Ye're juist bent on gaein', then, ma'am?" said Alison, in a very gentle voice for her. "Ye winna think it ower a wee?"

Trix's mouth went into a little hard red circle that meant immovable determination with her, and she shook her head slightly, looking sidewise down at the papers under

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her hand, as though anxious to get at them again.

“Ye winna let e’en *this* coax ye frae it?” said Alison, still more gently, even timidly, and laid the little bundle among the heaped papers.

“What is it?” asked Trix, frowning. “Is it for me?”

“Ay, for ye, ma’am . . . juist a bit giftie for the bairn that’s comin’. ’Tis naethin’ in itsel’ . . . but I hae pit some bonny thochts for ye twa intae the steetches . . .”

Trix’s face relaxed . . . softened . . . grew very gentle when she had untied the silk and saw before her the little elfin garments.

“That was a dear thing for you to do, Ailie,” said she, calling her so for the first time in her life. “You knitted me a lovely blanket for Tim, I remember, but it wasn’t near as beautiful as these. . . . I do think it was perfectly dear of you. Thank you a thousand times, Ailie.”

And she put out one inky little hand and grasped the old woman’s hand.

Alison’s face quivered for a second, like shaken water, but the next moment it was as composed as ever.

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“An’ ye winna let them spier at ye, to bide awa’ frae the horse-show? . . . Eh! My dear leddy, tae reesk twa lives. . . . Will ye no think on it a wee bit langer? . . . ’Til the maister wins back frae town . . . juist till then. . . . I wadna trouble ye . . . but, oh, I’d gi’e the last drap i’ my veins to haud ye back . . .”

Trix’s mouth had set again in that small ring. She took the little articles in her hand and got down from her tall chair.

“Alison,” she said, “I wouldn’t hurt your feelings for anything—I’m too touched and grateful to you about these lovely things . . . but I’ve a great deal to do, and my mind’s quite made up. So now, will you please go, for it’s nearly four o’clock, and I must have all these checks signed by five. You understand, Alison—I don’t mean to be cross. It’s just that there’s no use whatever in talking, and I’ve *got* to get through with this work. I thank you again and again for your thought of me and mine . . . for all your thoughts of us. . . . Now please go, and let me get back to work.”

“Aweel, ma’am,” said Alison, still with the utmost gentleness, “I hae dune my tapmaist.

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. . . Gin onything suld happen, wad ye mind sayin' as much tae the maister?"

"No . . . no, indeed. . . Certainly I will . . . I promise you," said Trix, hurriedly, and hastened to shut and lock the door after her.

XII

MAMMY HENNY'S apprehensions increased as she neared Alison's room. She racked her brain in vain to think of something that she had done or left undone to earn her a lecture from her dearest foe; but it was with a very sober face and subdued manner that she knocked finally at the shut door.

After a moment's pause the key turned on the inside, and Alison stood before her, with the door-knob in her hand.

"Eh, is it you, Henny Miner?" said she. "I was juist reddin' up my room a wee. The hour's by sax meenits, but ye're no kenspeckle for promptness at ony time."

"De la'ndry clock's slow, Mis' Stark," said Mammy, meekly. "I sut'n'y is be'n watchin' it tuh be on time. *What* you want wid me, annyhow, Mis' Stark? I sho' is be'n wuk-

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kin' my hade sump'n turr'ble tuh mek it out."

Alison permitted herself one of her grim smiles.

"Ye look fair frichtit, puir sowl," said she. "Am I sae thrawn as a' that? . . . Here, set ye doon. . . . I'm in a gi'ein' humor the day, Henny Miner, an' I hae mindit me o' a braw black manty, as guid as new, that I ha'e nae need for. 'Twould fit ye fine, an' I ha'e a sair langin' tae see ye gang tae kirk afore I dee drest in guid, honest black, like a decent body."

Mammy Henny watched her with saucer-eyes while she took from manifold wrappings of blue tissue-paper a long mantle of black grogram silk, set about the sleeves, breast, and neck with that grisly trimming known as "black bugles."

"Lor', Mis' Stark!" gasped she, "you sho' ain' meanin' dat fur *me*?"

"Dinna stan' thaur hecklin' wi' guid luck, but juist pit your airms tae these airmhales, afore I tire of haudin' up my ain," said Alison, standing with the garment extended at arm's-length.

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"Jeeze, Mis' Stark," said Mammy, as she wormed her great arms into the arm-holes that had been cut for the spare Alison years ago, "I cyarn' mek out what *is* be'n come over you tuh-day! Givin' me dis makernifercint gyarmint, an' talkin' so's I kin onderstan' you . . . an' . . . an' . . . actin' like anybordy else. . . . I 'clar' 'fo' Gawd . . . I sut'n'y c'u'd like you ef you kep' on dis-a-way."

"Henny Miner," said Alison, sharply, rendered apprehensive by a look in the other's great, soft, sentimental eyes, "dinna ye daur tae kiss me! . . . I cudna thole it . . ."

"Who's thinkin' o' kissin' you?" asked Mammy, wrathful in a moment. "I'd just as soon think a kissin' a hoe-cake! . . . Hyuh! Take dis hyah thing off'n me. . . . *I* don't want hit!"

"Na, na. . . . Ca' canny, woman, ca' canny . . ." said Alison, in a deep growl, meant to be soothing. "I didna mean to anger ye . . . but a' Scotch bodies . . . savin' the lads an' lasses . . . ha'e a muckle laith for the kissin'. I ha'e na kiss't my ain feyther for thretty year . . . an' the maister sen's me tae Scotlan' ilka twa years, as weel ye ken."

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“Well, den . . .” said Mammy, mollified, swelling her “bugled” bust and “rarin’” back, as she expressed it, before the little glass on top of Alison’s chest of drawers, in order to see as much as possible of her “makernificantly” clad proportions, “ef dat’s de way uv it . . . Dat meks all de diffunce ef kissin’ goes ag’inst you-all so pow’ful. . . . Gre’t day! . . . Ain’ I suppin’ in dis hyuh gran’ mantle, do’! Whoo-ee! I tell you dem po’ free niggers gwine tek de back seats when *I* go tuh chu’ch nex’ Sunday! Mis’ Stark—*lemme* kiss you—jes oncet!”

And she extended both “bugled” arms in Alison’s direction.

“Na, na . . .” cried the other, springing back with a look of real terror on her face. “I daur ye do it! . . . Gin ye even try tae . . . I’ll gie ye that ’ll gar ye lowp for it!”

“All right. . . . All right . . .” said Mammy, retiring at once. . . . “Twa’n’t dat I wanted tuh *kiss* you. . . . I jes wanted tuh *thank* you . . .”

“Thank me wi’ your tongue an’ not wi’ your mou’, then,” said Alison, with all her usual grimness, “or I’ll gie ye a sark fu’ o’ sair banes.”

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"Now you'se driftin' back inter dat lang-widge don' nobordy onderstan'," said Mammy, helplessly. "'Spec' I'd better be gwine. . . . Duz you *reely* mean fur me tuh tek dis 'long o' me, Mis' Stark?"

"Ay," said Alison. And then shamefacedly extending a stern arm with the graciousness of a pump-handle: "Here's a bit gowdy I ha'e tirit o'. . . . Ye can pit it tae your collar on a Sunday. . . . Na . . . dinna thank me," she broke off sharply, as Mammy exploded with profuse exclamations of joy and wonder over the little brooch, the unusual sentimentality of the situation becoming suddenly more than Alison could bear. "'Tis mair for mysel' an' ithers than for ye that I'm daein' it. . . . I'm sair wearit wi' seein' ye gang about a' Sab-baith wi' a breest-pin like that in the sang whaur 'the monkey mairrit the baboon's suster.'"

"Ef you'se meanin' anything 'bout cullud folks by yo' 'monkeys an' babboons,'" stormed Mammy, almost rending the mantle asunder in her fiery efforts to get it off, "you kin jes take back yo' ole cloak . . . right now . . . dis minuit."

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But again Alison came to the fore with soothing words.

“Dinna ye be sae like tow an’ flint, Henny Miner,” said she. “Dinna ye ken that the bride i’ yon sang wore a ‘green glass breast-pin’? an’ dinna ye wear the like ilka Sabbaith o’ your life? . . . I canna thole a glass gim-crack ony mair than I can kissin’. . . . Thaur, tak’ the brooch like a Chreestian frae a Chreestian, an’ dinna gae aff at ilka word like a fire-toy on a holiday.”

“Well, you sut’n’y kin saften things down when you got a min’ tuh,” said Mammy, again appeased. “I’ll take it, an’ thank you a heap, an’ *I’ll* ’member *you* nex’ Chris’mus. Hit sut’n’y is purty, rade gole. . . . Hit sho’ is a lovely keepsake. I gwine think uv you, Mis’ Stark, ev’y time I pins it on,” she concluded, with the sentimentality that always gave Alison a “cauld grue.”

“I wadna be promisn’ that,” said she, dryly. “I’d like fine tae think o’ ye as bein’ a’ways contentit when ye wear it. An’ noo I must be gettin’ back tae the letter-writin’. I’ve twa-three letters tae back yet, an’ ane tae write, an’ the boat gaes o’ Wednesdays an’

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this is Monday. Sae awa' wi' ye for the present."

That was certainly a "giein' day" with Alison. She bestowed a little gold dollar on Tim, later in the afternoon, for a "luck-penny," and what even more astonished, if it did not delight him as much, a hard, bumping kiss on his forehead.

"Dinna ye be spendin' that for sweeties noo," said she, sternly, by way of tempering the wind of good fortune to the gilded lamb; "keep it till ye're a man grawed tae remember your feyther's auld nurse by."

"I cert'n'y will, Nurse Ailie," said he. "You cert'n'y *are* sweet an' nice to-day." And he hooked a little arm in her sharp elbow and snuggled up against her flat chest. Alison did not say: "Hoots! Awa' wi' you an' your whillywhas . . ." or "What d'ye want the *noo*, my cock-a-bendy?" as she nearly always did, but just put her other arm about him, and held him so a minute.

Then she lifted him suddenly, and walking across the room, opened a little cupboard in the wall and told him to "keek in." There

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were various little packets, sealed and addressed, lying in tidy rows along the shelf.

“Luik well, my laddie,” said she; “an’ when I’m gaen tae Scotland, tell your feyther tae come here an’ get them a’. They’re a’ backit an’ ready tae send, an’ he’ll knaw what tae dae wi’ ’em. Gie me your waird ye’ll no forget.”

“No . . . I won’t . . . I promise you, Ailie,” said he, in his sweet, wheedling voice; then as she set him down: “My, Ailie! You cert’n’y are strong for your age, ain’t you? Mos’ ez strong ez a man, I reckon.”

“An’ why for suld I nae be?” asked Alison. “My feyther’s a hunner an’ twa, come Hallow Day, an’ gangs about his steadin’ like a laddie. Ou ay! Strang I am sin’ a lass. . . . Noo, rin aff, but dinna be tellin’ onybody about thae bit packets i’ the coopboard till I’m awa’. . . . ’Tis juist a secret atween us twa, ye ken.”

“No . . . no . . . I promise!” repeated Tim; and after another hug and kiss, which she did not rebuff, he ran off happily, with his gold “luck-penny.”

At two o’clock that night Alison leaned from her bed and lighted one of the “candle-

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dowps" for which Mammy so scorned her, and setting it in the flat, brass candlestick, got out of bed. As the flame burned up it was to be seen that she was fully dressed, and that she had been lying on the outside of her bed. She had on a short, stout skirt of gray homespun and a black print waist, and over a chair near by hung a jacket of the same serviceable stuff as her skirt.

Although the shades to her windows were lowered and the blinds shut, she took the candle and set it within a closet, half closing the door. Then she slipped her feet into a pair of list slippers, and began moving deftly but deliberately about the room. She had indeed "reddid up" that day. Not an article was out of place. The drawers in her chest were as tidy as those of a bride just come home to her new roof-tree, and everything that she looked for seemed to be laid to her hand.

First she took out a large plaid and spread it on the bed, then on this she laid some pieces of underwear, her brush and comb, all the various simple things that she might need for a short journey. When it was

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filled to her satisfaction she drew the ends together and knotted them, so as to make an easy handle. She next unlocked the little cupboard in the wall, and taking out the packets that she had shown Tim that afternoon, knelt down and examined them carefully by the light of the candle, behind the closet door, to be sure that each was correctly "backed." There was one for every negro on the place, including the pickaninny who had had her "palate lock" tied up last week, and after assuring herself that they were right, she laid them back on the shelf. There was another shelf above this one, and running her hand far back along it, Alison next drew out a long knife, set in a stout bone handle, and whetted to a sharp point from either side. With this she went again to the closet, and, crouching down, drew a long gray hair from her own head, and tried first one side of the blade and then the other against it. The thing was like a razor. The severed hairs floated, twisting and glistening, to the floor in the draughty candle-light. Over this knife she slipped a sheath of roughly stitched leather, and then put both into the bosom of her gown.

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She then lifted a stone from the hearth, that was hidden by a bit of carpet, and took out the savings of thirty years—all in neat packages of bank-notes.

“It maun ha’ been Gude Himsel’ wha keepit me a’ these years frae giein’ them to Maister Sidney tae pit in a bank . . . as he waur aye wantin’ tae dae,” she thought now, as she counted them over. One half she put into a little bag of chamois-skin, which she fastened about her waist, under her skirt; the other half she placed in a wooden box, locked it, and slipped the key under her pillow. This box she wrapped in a paper, upon which was already written, “For the Master of Old-wood.” This completed, she stood for a moment and looked around her with knitted brows, trying to recall something that she might have forgotten. Then suddenly the old face began to work strangely, she put up one hand over her mouth, and going to the bedside, felt for the square that her Bible made through the plaid in which she had wrapped it, and then kneeling down with her forehead against the strengthening hardness, she remained so for some moments.

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When she rose again her face was quite steady and her mouth set. Nothing to do now but put on her bonnet and coat, take the wooden box under her arm, the bundle and her heavy boots in one hand, and with the other extinguish the candle. She paused for an instant to slip a box of matches in her pocket, and then skirting the wall with her free hand, made the way step by step to the door. She had oiled the locks of both that and the back door of the house that afternoon, so that she slipped out as noiselessly as a gray ghost from the house that had been her home for three-and-thirty years.

“Gude’s blessin’ upo’ that roof-tree an’ a’ that’s under it an’ will be under it,” she whispered, turning for one last look as she descended the old stone steps of the porch. “And for him that’s awa, he will ken that ’tis but to bless him I am leevin’.”

Then she went swiftly and steadily toward the stables. It was a clear night, set with low, gold stars, but a young moon would be up in an hour, and Alison quickened her steps.

She did not go to the main stables, but paused at the gate of Over-the-Moon’s en-

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closure, and set her bundle and the box softly on the grass. Then stooping, she deftly oiled the padlock with the feather and phial that she had brought with her for the purpose, and taking out a key from her pocket, she slipped it in as noiselessly as she had done everything else, and entered the enclosure. Once inside, she stood stock-still for a minute and covered her face with both hands.

“Gude be wi’ me . . . Gude be wi’ me . . .” she whispered; then took a deep breath, and went on.

Within three yards of the loose-box door she paused and drew out some sugar from her pocket, then gave the low whistle that the horse knew so well. At first there was no answer. She whistled again, low and soft. This time a sleepy nicker answered her, and shortly the beautiful stag-head thrust itself from the window and sent a “quhirr” of inquiry through its nostrils.

“Ca’ canny, man, ca’ canny,” whispered Alison. She reached him a lump of sugar, and while he was eating it, opened the box door by the same process that she had opened the gate. Again she stood quite still before

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entering, and this time her hand went up to her heart and clutched there.

“Thaur is nae ither way . . .” she whispered. “Gude guide us a’ . . .” The next moment she was standing almost to her knees in the fresh, loose straw, with that warm, pungent smell, so pleasant to the lovers of horses, all about her. . . . She set the wooden box which she had brought with her in the manger, and turned around.

“Whaur are ye, mannie? . . . Come hither . . .” she said, in a low tone, and her voice shook. “What are ye doin’ thaur i’ th’ pit-mirk? Dinna ye ken your frien’s when . . .” but she broke off abruptly. . . . “O Gude A’michty . . .” she said, on a sort of sob. The roan was now snuffing at her through the gloom, and suddenly, with another little nicker of welcome, came quite up to her, and began rubbing his head against her, in that violently affectionate way that some horses have, so that she was nearly thrown off her balance.

“Saftly . . . saftly, my bonny lamb,” whispered she. . . . “Here’s your succar, my puir, puir hinny. Eat your fill . . .” and she broke off again, just standing there silent, while he

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nosed and nudged her, and crunched the sugar, and licked her hand like a dog with his warm, silk-soft tongue.

Then, suddenly, an astonishment to herself and the contradiction of her whole life, Alison flung her arms about the splendid neck, and wept as she had not wept since her first child was born dead to her. She kissed him . . . she spoke to him as a mother to her bairn . . . and now he licked her cheek and her ear as well as her hands, as though liking the salt taste of her tears, and with a sort of dumb inkling that grief was near him.

“I maun get it ower . . . I maun get it ower . . .” Alison said, thickly, and quaked at the sound of her own voice. “Gude be kind to me . . . I think I’m a bit awa’ i’ my heid. . . . I see a’ red i’ the pit-mirk here. . . .”

She drew back a little, and took the knife from her breast, drew off the sheath, and let it fall in the straw at her feet.

Then once more she slipped her arm about the horse’s neck. He stood as before, nosing her for sugar, and rubbing his head up and down against her. But now her fingers were running over the great thropple, down toward

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the chest—this way and that. He thought this a ticklish sort of game, and nipped up her sleeve playfully.

Where was it? . . . Was this the place? . . . Where did that great jugular vein divide? . . . Where had Stonehenge said that you must strike to bleed a horse? . . . Had she studied it all those Sabbaths spent away from church, harder than she had ever studied her Bible, to forget it now?

“I’m awa’ i’ my heid . . . I’m awa’ i’ my heid . . .” she kept repeating to herself. And then suddenly the horse tossed up his head . . . this was the place. . . . Yes . . . surely . . . just here . . .

“Forgi’e me, oh, forgi’e me!” she said, and struck once, deep and hard, into the great throat.

The roan gave a loud, terrified, coughing snort and flung himself wildly back against the opposite wall . . . she heard him snort again . . . and this time there seemed to be in it a horrid sound of wet choking. . . . Then she was out in the cool night again . . . running, stumbling, running on once more.

And she heard herself gasping words as she



TRIX SHED THE BITTEREST TEARS OF HER LIFE

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ran . . . and tried to stop them . . . and said them over and over, hearing them as it were a voice outside her speaking: "The hand that he trustit ha' smitten him. . . . The hand that he trustit ha' smitten him . . ."

Trix shed the bitterest tears of her short, self-willed life next morning, sitting on the ground, regardless of the dreadful mess of blood, with the stark head of her favorite on her lap.

And she went through a very black and human phase of blind rage against Alison. Later on in the day, however, when she had opened the wooden box and read the letter to Sidney that it contained, the sense of justice that was the backbone of her sturdy nature made her see things differently, even touched her in an odd way, through the fierce anger that still possessed her. Half of her savings the old woman had left to pay for the horse, whose value she did not exactly know, and in her simple message to Sidney she told him that though she shrank from "doing murder on a poor beast," it was the only way to save two lives and his happiness forbye.

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Still later that afternoon, when poor Alison was brought back in the cart of a farmer, who had heard her unconscious moans, and had gone to her rescue with the help of two of the farm-hands, all Trix's bitterness against her fled for good.

Alison's plans had been as simple as her letter and her actions. In the former she had told Sidney that she intended to go to Dumfries, and bide a wee there with her eldest son Jamie until she could get a bit roof for herself. If the money she had left was not enough to pay for the loss of the horse, he was kindly to let her know.

When she left the stables she had intended going by a short cut through fields and woods that she knew well to a station some seven miles from Oldwood, and there take the train for Washington, and so on to New York, whence she would sail for Scotland on Wednesday's steamer. Her second-class ticket was in the little chamois-skin bag with her money. She had left nothing to chance, and chance had mistrusted with her in the end—for it was while on a little path that led by one end of an old quarry, in the west field, that

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she had caught her foot in a root and fallen down the jagged side, happily not very steep here, to lie senseless at the bottom until found by the passing farmer.

She was still unconscious when they got her to bed, and remained so until the doctor came. He gave them little hope. "She can hardly get over it, Mrs. Bruce," said he. "There is some internal injury, and there's been a double shock to the whole system, both mental and physical. A woman of seventy cannot lie on the ground for ten hours or so after such a fall and have much chance for recovery. She'll probably linger a few days . . . two or three . . . and she may regain consciousness . . . there's no serious injury to the head. . . . But I'm afraid we can only make her as comfortable as possible . . ."

Then Trix, after telegraphing for Sidney, set about with all her vigorous will to help make Alison "as comfortable as possible," while Mammy Henny followed her about, sobbing as though her dearest friend lay there, instead of a thrawn old woman who had made her life a burden at times for the past ten years.

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The next day about noon Alison opened her eyes and looked steadily about her. Trix was not in the room at the time, but Mammy Henny tumbled to the bedside with cries of, "Thank de Lawd! . . . De Lawd's name be praised!" and held a spoonful of milk and brandy to the dry lips. Alison swallowed it with unaccustomed obedience, and then said, faintly:

"Dinna heed if I say unco' things. . . . I'm a wee awa' i' th' heid . . ."

"Say all you wants, po' honey," urged Mammy. "I don't keer *what* you say. Cyarn' you mek out tuh 'buse me a leetle?" But Alison had closed her eyes, and seemed again unconscious.

Presently she whispered:

"How cam' I i' this cham'er again?"

Mammy Henny told her, with sighs and moans of sympathy, interwoven with bright prophecies for the future.

Alison only remarked at the end:

"Weel, I ken, Henny Miner, that I'm on my deith-bed. I'll be awa' afore tae-morrow morn. Dinna skirl sae, woman; ye'd deave the miller, an' I wad dee a decent deith. . . ."

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Mammy stifled her groans in the counterpane after that, but her great shoulders heaved as she knelt beside the bed.

Presently Alison just touched the bent kerchief with a weak hand, and said:

“Ye nicht na think it . . . but I hae likit ye weel, Henny Miner.”

“An’ I sut’n’y is be’n luvè you, do’ I didn’ know it,” sobbed Mammy. “You’sè a good ’ooman. . . . You’sè a good ’ooman. . . . You done save my baby’s life when I couldn’t do nothin’. . . . I dun’no’ how I gwine mek out widout you.”

And she covered her head with her apron, and went on sobbing and rocking herself to and fro.

Alison wandered a little after that, and Mammy stole out to fetch the mistress. When they came back the old woman was plucking at the fringe of the counterpane and talking in a low, fluttering voice, broken by gasps. Trix bent over her and spoke to her gently, but Alison did not recognize her. Sometimes Trix could catch a sentence or two, and then all trailed away into a confused muttering. Once she said:

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“I like fine tae think o’ thae horses that won frae heaven for the prophet.” And again:

“Thaur will be fower horses mention’t i’ th’ Buik o’ Reveelation. . . . Wha kens gin ‘the sawl o’ the beast gaeth downward’? . . . It might be a wrang translation . . . Wha kens? . . .”

Trix gave her a hypodermic of the medicine left by the doctor, and a few minutes after, as she was bending over her, the gray eyes fixed on hers with a look of recognition.

“Ablins, when I’m awa’ ye’ll can forgi’e me?” whispered Alison.

“I forgive you now . . . I forgive you now . . .” said Trix, earnestly. “I know you did it because you thought it was the only thing to save me. Do you understand me? I forgive you now . . . now . . .”

“Gude keep ye. . . . Ye’ve a grand gift o’ juistice for a woman body,” said Alison, faintly. Then she added: “An’ I’ll no lee tae ye on my deith-bed . . . I hae nae lo’ed ye ower weel. . . . but I’d like fine tae try again . . .”

Sidney came late that afternoon, and rushed at once to the room where his old nurse lay

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dying. He knelt beside the bed and took her hand in his.

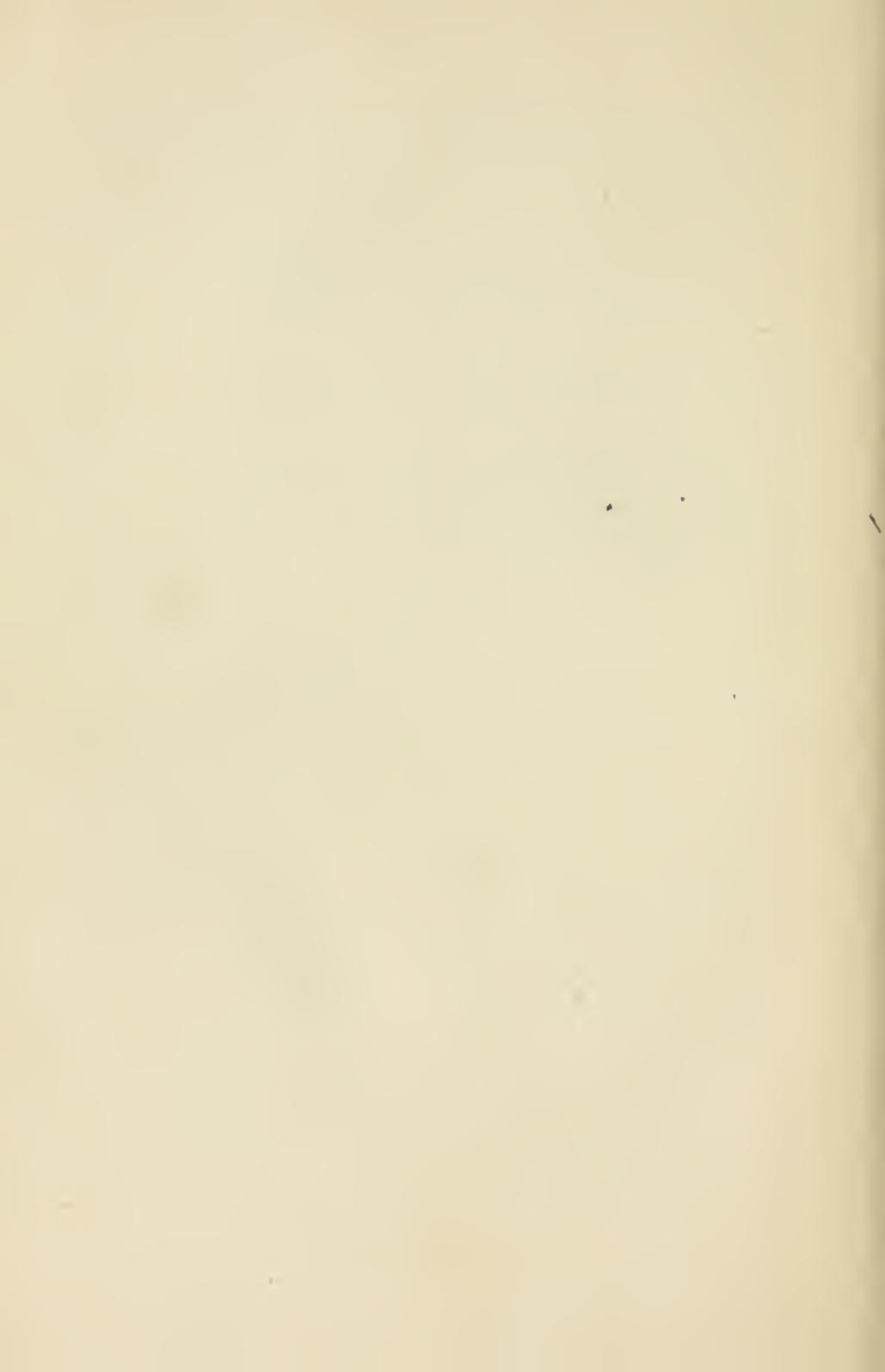
“Ailie! . . . Ailie! . . .” he called to her, and she roused from the stupor into which she had sunk during the last hour, and looked at him.

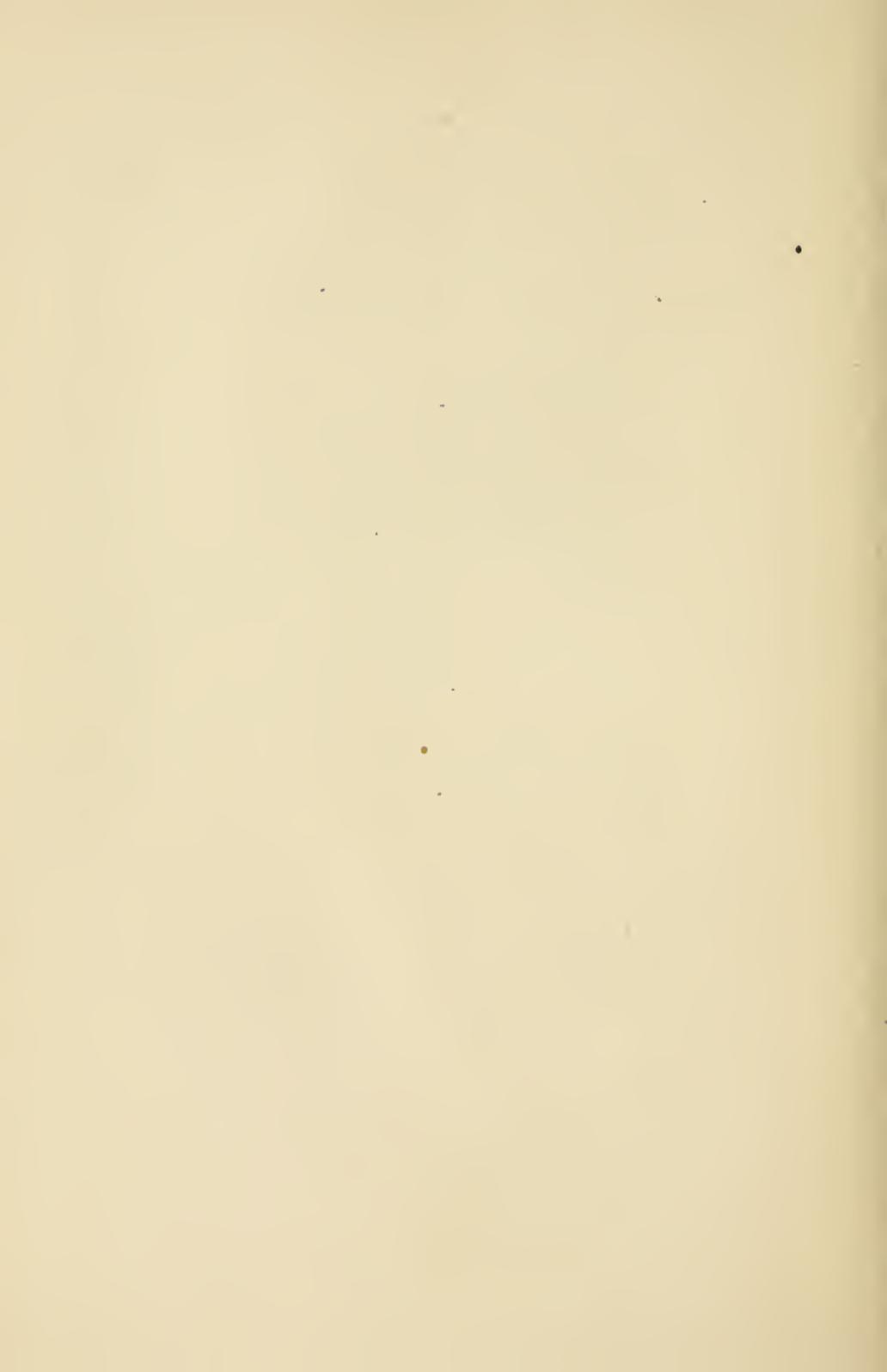
“Maister Seedney,” she whispered.

The light broke in her eyes, the old hand dragged in his.

“What is it, Ailie? . . . What is it, dear old Ailie?” he asked, bending close to her.

But Alison was “awa’.”





Chanler

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